JB

A HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

VOL. III.

A HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

BY

JOHN BUCHAN

IN FOUR VOLUMES

VOL. III.

FROM THE BATTLE OF VERDUN TO THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES

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A HISTORY OF THE GREAT WAR

BOOK II. (*Continued*).

CHAPTER LIII.

THE BRITISH LINE IN THE WEST.

February 8–*June* 18, 1916.

Fighting around the Ypres Salient—The Canadians attacked—The Training of the New Armies—The "Breaking-point" in War—The Prophylactics against Fear—Death of the younger Moltke.

(*Map*, p. 596).

WHEN the Imperial Crown Prince unleashed his attack on Verdun one part of his purpose was to induce a British counter-offensive. Hence the German lines were not thinned elsewhere; least of all on the British front, where the chief danger was anticipated. The citadel on the Meuse soon became a maelstrom which sucked in all free strategic reserves, and demanded the complete attention of the German Staff. Elsewhere the war seemed to stand still, while the world watched the most heroic and skilful defence that history had known. Verdun was France's exclusive business, and her generals chose to hold the line there with their own troops, and to ask for no reinforcements from the British front. Kitchener at once offered British divisions for the Meuse, but Joffre gratefully declined them. Help, however, was given in another way. The British armies took over the whole line from Ypres to the Somme, and the French Tenth Army, which had held the line from Loos to a point south of Arras, was released for the main battle ground. This was not the only contribution made by the Allies during that long struggle. On 20th April a contingent of Russian troops, some 8,000 strong, landed at Marseilles. They had been brought across Siberia, and then by sea from Dalny, by way of the Suez Canal. Their number could represent no great accession to the

French field force, but their presence was a proof of the new attempt at a unification of command among all the Allies which was needed to give effect to their unity of purpose.

To the spectator it appeared that during the first half of 1916 the British army was stagnant in the West. The judgment was in error. Its duty was the hard one of waiting—long months of desultory trench fighting with no concerted movement, no great offensive purpose, to quicken the spirit. It was a costly duty. Frequently the daily toll was over 1,000; and if we take only an average daily loss of 500, that gives a total in six months of 90,000 men. From it all there came, apparently, no military result of any consequence. The British army was neither attacking nor seriously on the defence, and those indeterminate weeks were for officers and men among the hardest to bear in the whole campaign. Apart from the steady normal bombardment, the main activities were mining, and the enterprises which were known as "cutting-out parties." Both had been going on all winter, but in the new year they became a formula and a habit. Their chief use was to keep the spirit of the offensive alive in our men, to harass the enemy, and to provide information as to the exact German dispositions. Everywhere from Ypres to the Somme such raids were attempted, and on the whole we, who were the initiators of the adventures, kept the lead in them. But the Germans retaliated with various raids which, after their fashion, were more elaborately organized than ours. Mobile batteries toured along their front, and at different places opened a bombardment, under cover of which their infantry raided our front line, and carried off prisoners. It was remarked that these attempts were specially common south of Arras. Places like Gommecourt, La Boisselle, and Carnoy were frequently selected, as if the enemy had grown suspicious of that section of front which had never yet been the theatre of any great attack.

The only serious fighting in the first half of the year took place in and around the Ypres Salient. There was no new Battle of Ypres, as many expected; but there was a long-drawn struggle for certain points, which in the total wastage produced the results of a great action. In that ill-omened Salient the Germans held all the higher and better ground, and especially all the points which gave direct observation for artillery. Our trenches were for the most part in the water-logged flats, and when we reached dry ground we were, as a rule, commanded from elevations in front and flank. Further, all our communications were at the mercy

of the enemy's shell fire. The trouble began on 8th February, when the German guns opened a heavy bombardment, which endured for several days. On the 12th, early in the morning, an infantry attack was delivered at the extreme left of our line, near the point of junction with the French on the canal. Next day the centre of interest moved to the other side of the Salient. At Hooge the Germans had sapped out, and linked up their sap-heads into a connected line 150 yards from our front. On the 13th their guns obliterated our front trenches. On the 14th, in the afternoon, the whole section was under an intense bombardment, a series of mines were exploded, and infantry attacks were launched against our positions at Hooge and at the north and south ends of Sanctuary Wood. They failed, being checked by our rifle and machine-gun fire long before they reached their objective.

Farther south the enemy had better fortune. On the north bank of the Ypres-Comines Canal was a ridge, 30 to 40 feet high, which owed its existence largely to the excavations for the channel. It was part of that horseshoe of shallow upland which separated the Ypres basin from the vale of the Lys, and connected in the south with the ridge of Messines. This particular hillock was covered with trees and was held by both sides, and to that eastern part of it over which our line passed we gave the name of The Bluff. A bombardment on the afternoon of the 14th all but obliterated our trenches there, and the infantry rush which followed captured them and their continuation to the north—in all, about 600 yards. It was an awkward piece of ground to lose, and after two fruitless attempts to recover it, we were compelled to sit down and wait for a better chance. The opportunity came on 2nd March, after the enemy had been in possession for seventeen days. To the 3rd Division was entrusted the task of winning the ground back. For several days we bombarded steadily, and at 4.30 on the morning of 2nd March our infantry, wearing for the first time their new steel helmets, effected a complete surprise. They rushed the German trenches and found the enemy with bayonets unfixed, and many of them without rifles or equipment. The British right carried The Bluff with ease. The centre pushed through the German front, and took the third line, which they held long enough to enable the main ground to be consolidated. The left was delayed at first, but since those on its right could bring an enfilading fire to bear on the enemy, it presently was able to advance to its objective.

At the end of the month the British again attacked. The Ypres Salient now represented a shallow semicircle, beginning in

the north at Boesinghe, on the Ypres-Dixmude Canal, and ending in the south at St. Eloi. At the latter point a small German salient had encroached on our line, to the depth of about 100 yards on a front of 600. It was resolved to get rid of this, and straighten our front, the place being roughly defined by the crossroads south of the village of St. Eloi, where the Messines and Warneton roads branched off. The first step was the exploding, on 27th March, of six large mines within the salient, a shock so colossal that it was felt in villages far behind the battle ground. Half a minute later the infantry—a brigade from the 3rd Division—were racing across the open to the German trenches. Inside the salient there was nothing but death and destruction; but machine guns were busy on the flanks, and the left of the attack did not reach its objective, so that a way was left for the Germans to occupy one of the mine craters. The next few days were spent in repelling counter-attacks and endeavouring to oust the enemy from the crater which he held. This was successfully accomplished on 3rd April, and we thus gained the whole of our original objective—the German first and second lines on a front of 600 yards.

Then followed some weeks of confused and difficult fighting. The 3rd Division was relieved by the 2nd Canadian Division, whose task was to consolidate the ground won. Little of the work had been done; little could have been done owing to the weariness of the troops which had made the attack, and the water-logged soil, now churned into glutinous mire by the shelling and the mine explosions. The communication trenches had all been obliterated, and the German second line beyond the crater, which we nominally held, had never been properly converted, and was in any case practically destroyed by our own artillery fire. There was a very general doubt as to where exactly was the British front line, and where was the German. In such conditions it was not difficult for the enemy to push us out of his old second line. The Canadians —especially the 6th Brigade—were now holding isolated craters with no good communications between them. The near side of each crater was under direct enemy observation and constant fire, so that supplies and reliefs could only come up at night, and it was all but impossible to evacuate the wounded. At any one moment it was difficult to say what craters were held, and this uncertainty led to mistakes in sending up reliefs and considerable losses. Meantime an incessant bombardment went on, and some of the craters were reduced to mere mud holes in no-man's-land, incapable of being held by either side. The Canadians occupied a demolished

and much inferior position against greatly superior artillery, with few chances of communication, and no cover for approach except the darkness of the night. The general result was that we found the gains of March 27th and 3rd April untenable, and gradually loosened our hold on them.

April and May saw various local attacks in the Ypres Salient, at Loos, and on the Vimy Ridge; and in June these scattered activities drew to a head in one section, as if to anticipate the great Allied offensive now looming in the near future. The place was once again the Salient, that section of it from Hooge to the Ypres–Comines railway. It was held at the moment by the Canadians—the 3rd Division, under Major-General Mercer. South of Hooge lay the collection of broken tree trunks called Sanctuary Wood; then the flat watery fields around Zwartelen, where the Household Cavalry made their dismounted charge at the First Battle of Ypres; then just north of the Ypres–Menin railway the mound which was famous as Hill 60. Behind, between the British front and Ypres, was the hamlet of Zillebeke, with its melancholy pond. The area of the attack was nearly two miles in width, and being the apex of a salient, the Germans were able to concentrate their fire from three sides. At 9 o'clock on the morning of 2nd June a bombardment was loosed on the British front trenches, and a barrage was placed over the whole hinterland. The infantry attack, in spite of heavy losses, had by the evening won the whole of our old first line on a front of a mile and three-quarters, and during the night pushed through our centre towards Zillebeke to a depth of 700 yards. General Mercer was killed early in the day by shell fire, and General Williams of the 7th Canadian Brigade was wounded and made prisoner.

At seven o'clock on the morning of the next day, 3rd June, the Canadians counter-attacked. They pressed on most gallantly, and won back much of the lost ground. But they could not stay in it, owing to the intensity of the German artillery fire, and they were compelled to fall back from most of that shell-swept area, which became a kind of extended no-man's-land. For two days the battle was stationary, and then at midday on 6th June the German guns opened again, concentrating on the front south and north of the shattered village of Hooge. North of that place they exploded a series of mines between three and four in the afternoon, and presently their infantry had penetrated our first-line trenches. This meant that the extreme point of the Ypres Salient had been flattened in, that our front now ran behind what had once been

Hooge village, and that the enemy had advanced as far as the Bellewaarde brook.

For a week the battle declined to an intermittent bombardment, for infantry raids were impossible owing to the downpour of rain. Then at 1.30 on the morning of 13th June a fresh Canadian division —the 1st, under Major-General Currie—attacked on a front of 500 yards, extending from the south end of Sanctuary Wood to a point 1,000 yards north of Hill 60. They found that the enemy had not gone far in consolidating his gains, and they found, too, that our previous bombardments had done great execution. They occupied all his advanced line, and regained their original front trenches in the most important part of the section, inflicting heavy losses. Such gains in the marshes of the Salient were of little serious value, but they were a proof that the enemy could not take positions there in which he could abide.

In spite of these episodes the first half of 1916 was for the British field army a season of comparative quiet—a fortunate circumstance, for it enabled Haig to complete his command and perfect its training. Before midsummer the total of the British army at home and abroad was nearly five million. The nation was so prone to self-criticism that few realized and fewer admitted the stupendous and unparalleled character of this military achievement. There had been nothing like it in the history of any nation. With the possible exception of France, Britain had mobilized for the direct and indirect purposes of war a larger proportion of her population than any belligerent country. Moreover, while engaged in also supplying her Allies, she had furnished this vast levy with its necessary equipment. She had jettisoned all her old theories and calculations, and in a society which had not for a hundred years been called upon to make a great effort against an enemy, a society highly differentiated and industrialized, a society which lived by sea-borne commerce, and so could not concentrate like certain other lands exclusively on military preparation, she had provided an army on the largest scale, and provided it out of next to nothing. She had to improvise officers and staff, auxiliary services, munitionment—everything. She had to do this in the face of an enemy already fully prepared. She had to do it, above all, at a time when war had become a desperately technical and scientific business, and improvisation was most difficult. It is possible to assemble speedily hosts of spearmen and pikemen, but it seemed beyond human capacity to improvise men to use the bayonet and machine gun, the bomb and the rifle. But Britain had done it, and had done

it for the most part by voluntary enlistment. It was easy to point out defects in her organization. Some critics—notably Mr. Churchill—argued that there was an undue proportion of ration strength to fighting strength; that half the total ration strength of the army was still at home; that of the half abroad, half fought and half did not fight; that of the half that fought, about three-quarters were infantry in the trenches, on whom fell almost all the loss; that of every six men recruited at one end, only one infantry rifle appeared over the parapets at the other; and that some 2,000,000 soldiers had never been under fire. Undoubtedly there was room for "combing-out"; for the *embusqué* existed in the British as in other armies, and the staff at home had grown to a preposterous size. But in modern war, with its intricate organization, it was clear that an army must have a far greater proportion of men behind the line than in any former campaign. The apparatus was so vast that the operative point must seem small in contrast to the mechanism which produced it.

Meantime Haig was busy with the task for which he was qualified above almost all living soldiers, the training of troops. He had now received the balance of the New Army divisions from home as well as various units released from Gallipoli, and to produce that homogeneity which is necessary in a field force much thought and time had to be given to field training. The work was performed by the Commander-in-Chief and his generals with infinite care, enthusiasm, and judgment. "During the periods of relief," he wrote, "all formations, and especially the newly created ones, are instructed and practised in all classes of the present and other phases of warfare. A large number of schools also exist for the instruction of individuals, especially in the use and theory of the less familiar weapons, such as bombs and grenades. There are schools for young staff officers and regimental officers, for candidates for commissions, etc. In short, every effort is made to take advantage of the closer contact with actual warfare, and to put the finishing touches, often after actual experience in the trenches, to the training received at home." The British armies in the field during the first half of 1916 were one great training school.

In these months the mind of the High Command was facing a problem for the solution of which little data existed in past history. A great attack was in prospect—the greatest effort as yet made by the Allies in the campaign—and it must be made with a new type of army. The old regular was a known quantity; the new soldier,

representing every rank of life and variety of mind and temperament, was still to be assessed. He had physique, brains, energy, and devotion, but he could not in the nature of things have that instinctive discipline which is the product only of years of service. Hence the effect of the new battle conditions upon the *moral* of the fighting man became a question of extreme practical urgency. In the last resort all wars depend upon the resisting power of five or six feet of shrinking human flesh. The men who fought at Marathon were not greatly different in physique and temperament from those who fought in Champagne and Poland. A pressure too great will overpower body and spirit. We have no scale by which to measure that pressure; but, whether it be produced by clouds of arrows, by the swords of the legionaries, or by the shells of great guns, it must at all times in history have been approximately the same in quantity. There is always a breaking-point for the mortal soldier.

The psychology of the fighting man in war had never as yet been made the subject of a professorial treatise. It was a work which might have been expected from the Teutonic genius, but it may be that the difficulty of making laboratory experiments stood in the way. Consequently the task had been left to the romancers, who usually argued without data. But, since mankind will always speculate upon a matter which so vitally concerns it, there was a variety of working rules which every soldier knew, but which he rarely formulated. The chief concerned the difficulty of sitting still under heavy fire. That was why the men in the support trenches which the enemy was shelling had a more difficult task than the attack. The chance of movement was a relief, and the fact that a definite job was before a man gave him something better to think about than expectations of a speedy decease. That was why, too, the officer, who had the problem of keeping his men together and getting them somewhere, was less likely to be troubled with nerves than the man whose business was merely to follow. To keep the mind engrossed was the great prophylactic against fear.

The practical question was when the breaking-point would be reached—after what proportion of losses the defensive or the offensive would crumble. The question was really twofold, for the problem in defence was different in kind from the problem in attack. In the latter, to continue required a certain modicum of hope and mental energy; in the former there need be no hope, but only a passive and fatalistic resistance. It was useless to speculate about the breaking-point in a defence. Against savage

enemies, when there was no hope of quarter, even ordinary troops would resist desperately. Again, if men from pride of honour or from any other cause were wholly resolved not to surrender, they would perish to the last man. There was no man left of the Spartans at Thermopylæ, or Roland's paladins at Roncesvalles, or the steel circle of the Scots nobles at Flodden. Yakub and the defenders of the Black Flag were utterly destroyed at Omdurman. There were no survivors of that portion of the 3rd Canadian Brigade at the Second Battle of Ypres which held St. Julien. The men, too, who found themselves in the last extremity, and were supported by a shining faith, would wait on death as on a bridal. Gordon in his last days could write: "I would that all could look on death as a cheerful friend, who takes us from a world of trial to our true home." Or in another mood, with the exultation of the mystic on the threshold of immortality: "Look at me now, with small armies to command and no cities to govern. I hope that death will set me free from pain, and that great armies will be given me, and that I shall have vast cities under my command."

But in attack the question of the breaking-point was pertinent. After what losses would a unit lose its coherence and dissolve? The question, of course, only applied to corporate things like a company, a squadron, or a battalion, which depend for their military effect on training and discipline. A surge of individuals vowed to death will perish to the last man. A rush of Ghazis, determined to enter Paradise, will not cease so long as any are alive. Take the charge of Ali-Wad-Helu's horsemen against the left of Macdonald's brigade at Omdurman. Mr. Churchill has described it. "Many carrying no weapon in their hand, and all urging their horses to their utmost speed, they rode unflinchingly to certain death. All were killed and fell as they entered the zone of fire—three, twenty, fifty, two hundred, sixty, thirty, five and one out beyond them all—a brown smear across the sandy plain. A few riderless horses alone broke through the ranks of the infantry." There was no rule for such Berserker courage. The question was, how far discipline would carry men who had no hankering for Paradise.

In the eighteenth century it carried them very far. Those were the days of a rigid and elaborate drill, and a discipline observed with the punctiliousness of a ritual. It may have been inelastic and preposterous, and destined to go down before a less mechanical battle order, but it achieved miracles all the same. Military records

from Blenheim to Jena are starred with examples of the most conspicuous fortitude. Napoleon and the armies of the Revolution largely upset the old régime, but they, too, could achieve the impossible, and the last charge of the French Guard at Waterloo is among the classic feats of history.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century, when human life began to be more highly valued, and philosophers looked forward to the decline of war, there was a tendency to underestimate the power of human endurance. Theorists took to fixing a maximum loss in attack beyond which civilized troops could not keep cohesion. The favourite figure was twenty-five per cent.; but as a matter of fact this was exceeded in many contemporary instances, such as the charge of Pickett's Virginians at Gettysburg and Bredow's *Todtenritt* at Mars-la-Tour, when of the 7th Magdeburg Cuirassiers only 104 returned, and of the 16th Lancers only 90. This maximum, whatever justification it may have once possessed, ceased to have much meaning as the conditions of fighting changed, and it was altogether exploded by the performance of the Japanese at Port Arthur. The truth is that no such figures could mean much, for the power of a unit to advance after losses depended entirely upon circumstances. For one thing, a cavalry charge was different from an infantry attack. The swift, headlong movement of the former deadened consciousness and the faculty of introspection, and a mounted remnant might go on where foot soldiers would slacken. Again, much depended upon the casualties among the officers. Normally, if a high proportion of officers fell, the unit would go to pieces, even though its total losses were not extravagant. But even this rule had striking exceptions, such as the achievement of the 7th Gloucesters at Gallipoli, who fought from midday till sunset on 8th August without any officer, and the 19th London at Loos, who, with their commissioned ranks practically out of action, carried out their part in the advance without a hitch. Again, the sense of winning, of being the spear-head of a successful thrust, might add to corporate discipline the complete fearlessness of the fanatic. The human spirit might be keyed up to such a point that each man acquired a separate purpose distinct from the purpose of his unit, and would go on, however badly his unit were mauled. The 9th Black Watch at Loos, and more than one regiment in Champagne, provided instances where a battalion continued to advance successfully when it was little more than a company strong. Or pride in a glorious record might in exceptional cases inspire the wildest heroism, even when there was no hope of victory,

as was proved by the performance of Irmanov's 3rd Caucasians in their great fight at Jaslo, in the retreat from the Donajetz.

At first sight it seemed safe to say that the most modern conditions of war must weaken the nerve power for an attack. The shattering percussion of the great shells, the curtain of shrapnel, the malign chatter of the machine guns, the heavy fumes of high explosives, the deadly effect of trench mortars, and such extra tortures as gas, asphyxiating shells, and lachrymatory bombs, seemed to make up an inferno too awful for man to endure. Besides, there was the maddening slowness of it all. In the old days battles were over in a few hours, or, at the most, a day. An attack succeeded or failed, but did not stretch into endless stages, each involving a new effort, and, in the intervals, the grimmest discomfort. Much can be done if there is good hope that it will soon be over. But if the gain of one position only paved the way for an attack upon a second, the nervous tension would not be relieved by any such expectation. A man could not tell himself, "If I live through the next half-hour I will be safe," for he knew that even if he lived through the next half-hour there was every chance that he would fall five minutes later. A modern attack was of necessity lengthy, dogged, and sullen.

Yet it was doubtful if this increase in the terror of war had lowered the breaking-point. To meet it, modern armies seemed to have attained an increase in nerve power. The explanation, perhaps, was that the carnival of violence carried with it its own cure. After a little experience of it the senses and imagination were deadened. The soldier revised his outlook, and the new terror became part of the background, and so was half forgotten. If the tension at any one time lasted too long, the deadening might stop, and the tortured nerves be exposed again. But if the senses were once blunted, and no opportunity was given for that awakening when the wheel came full circle, the human soul would adapt itself to the strangest conditions. That seemed to be one moral of the campaign.

There were certain prophylactics against fear. The bellicosity of the natural man stopped short at the modern apparatus of combat. No sane man was born with a love of shell fire, and few sane men have ever acquired a complete impassivity in face of it. Certainly not the best soldiers. The first fact to be recognized was that the ordinary man, however stout his patriotism, would want to run away. The confession of the New York private in the American Civil War was true of all wars and of the raw material of all armies.

"We heard all through the war that the army was eager to be led against the enemy. It must have been so, for truthful correspondents said so, and editors confirmed it; but when you come to hunt for this particular itch it was always the next regiment that had it. The truth is, when bullets are whacking against tree trunks, and solid shot are cracking skulls like egg-shells, the consuming passion in the heart of the average man is to get out of the way. Between the physical fear of going forward, and the moral fear of turning back, there is a predicament of exceptional awkwardness, from which a hidden hole in the ground would be a wonderfully welcome outlet." *

The first safeguard against fear was the sense of community. That was the meaning of discipline, that the individual lost himself in the unit, that he acquired the instinct to act in a certain way, even when a fluttering heart and a shrinking body bade him refrain. The man who with tight lips and a pale face advanced and held his ground under fire might be acting from a sense of duty or honour, but most commonly he was simply following an acquired instinct. But to give this instinct full play there must be the sense of companionship, and this was apt to be lost if the individual were too isolated. That was why the Germans, who used open order in 1870, had so many stragglers, and consequently in later years tended to adopt mass formations, having to incorporate in their ranks many partially trained and unwilling elements. That was why a thin skirmishing line always demanded a fairly high degree of training. In any case, whatever the experience of the troops, to preserve the sense of community it was necessary that they should have the consciousness that supports were not far off. They should be aware that behind them were other troops to reinforce them, and to profit by their efforts. This precept was recognized in the disposition of the Roman legions, and it was one of Napoleon's chief maxims. We find it in the French regulations of 1875, which provided for *renforts*, to fill up the gaps in the firing line, and *soutiens*, who were meant to remain in the rear and produce a moral effect on the striking force. An officer of the 1870 war, quoted by Colonel Colin, wrote: "Every man should be able to see a little way behind him a body of troops which is following him and backing up his movements. He gets great confidence in that way, and will be brave far more readily. In several critical situations I have heard the following reflection in the mouth of the men: 'There is no one behind us!' The words circulated from

* *Battles and Leaders of the Civil War*, Vol. II., p. 662.

one to another, anxious heads were turned back, almost inevitably dash faded away." *

A second safeguard was action. "Immobility, physical, moral, and intellectual stagnation, surrender a man unreservedly to his emotions; whereas movement, work of any kind, tends to deliver him from them." Movement was not always possible, but whenever it could be permitted it was a great security against fear. The Japanese knew this, and in the Manchurian war their speed of advance was amazing. The latter part of the 1870 war was fought by the French mainly with untrained troops, and whenever they did well it was because they were taken forward at a brisk pace. If movement was out of the question, shooting was a relief even when it was ineffective. A famous student of the psychology of war has called it "the safety-valve of fear."

But the greatest of all safeguards was simply custom. It was the end to which the other safeguards were ancillary. Human nature becomes case-hardened under the sternest trials. If troops were "entered" skilfully to the terrors of war, it was amazing what a protective sheath formed over the soldier's nerves. A new battalion during its first day in the trenches might be restless and "jumpy"; in a week it was at ease, and most probably too callous to the risks of the business. All men employed in dangerous trades—fishermen, sailors, miners, railwaymen—have this happy faculty. It is a Western form of *kismet*, a belief that till their hour comes they are safe. If death at any moment may appear out of the void it is useless to fuss about it, for nothing that they do can prevent it. Once this stoicism was attained the men were seasoned. War, instead of being a season of horrid tremors, became a routine, even a dull routine. It seems strange to use the word "dull" in connection with so hazardous a game, but such was the fact. Seasoned troops adjusted themselves to their novel environment, and for one man who found it too nerve-racking ten would find it monotonous.

With due preparation and careful treatment, it seemed certain that even in modern war the breaking-point could be postponed very far. The callous sheath, once it had formed, was hardy enough. But it was important to make sure that it was given a chance of forming. To use raw troops in a serious movement before they had been broken to war was to court disaster, and to be cruelly unfair to the troops themselves. And even with seasoned men it had to be remembered that there was always a breaking-

* *The Transformations of War*, p. 80.

point. Armies are delicate things, and the finer their temper the more readily will they be ruined by clumsy handling. The best force in the world can be tried too high. A battalion which was left too long in, or returned too often to, a bad section of trench line was apt to lose heart. So with the use of troops in action. It was a mistake to send in a unit too often and at too short intervals, more especially if it was seriously depleted in strength. The vigour of the offensive departed, and at the best was replaced by the fatalism of the defensive.

The matter had a special urgency in relation to the future offensive which occupied the minds of the Allies during the winter of 1915–16. It was becoming clear that every artillery "preparation" must be limited in range, and that troops which advanced too far under its cover would, sooner or later, be brought up against unbroken defences. The natural conclusion was that any advance must be by way of stages—the capture of one position by infantry, and then an artillery concentration against the next position, followed by a second infantry attack. But it was certain that troops which were checked in their first impetus, and compelled to consolidate the ground won and beat off counter-attacks, would be tried too high if, some days later, they were given the task of assaulting the next position. In such tactics we might at any moment stumble upon the breaking-point. The remedy was, obviously, the use of fresh troops for each stage of the advance, a constant chain of reserves passing up for each movement. By such a method every stage would have the advantage of a fresh impetus, and the supreme trial of modern war—recurrent efforts in which the spirit of the offensive must flag from sheer exhaustion—be avoided save in the last necessity.

This note would be incomplete without a reference to that high and sublimated battle spirit which is rare at the best of times, but which in all armies is possessed by the fortunate few. "Joy of battle" is a phrase too lightly used, and may well seem to most men a grim misnomer. Yet it is a reality, a thing which comes not from the deadening of feeling, but from its quickening and transmutation. It belongs especially to youth, which finds in the colossal hazards of war an enlarged vitality. It is not pugnacity, for there is no rancour in it; the Happy Warrior fights not because he has much to hate, but because he has much to love. The true type is the minstrel Volker of Alsace, in the "Lay of the Nibelungs," whose weapon was a sword-fiddlebow; every blow he struck went home, but every blow was also a note of music. Such souls

have won not relief only, but joy; not merely serenity, but exultation. The glory of life is never felt more keenly than when the next moment may see it quenched, for the greatest of its glories is to be armed and mailed for the fray. In the ascending scale of battle tempers we may place first acquiescence, then peace, and last this positive glow and welcome. It found perfect expression in the verses which Captain Julian Grenfell wrote before his death at Second Ypres, when spring was flushing the Flanders meadows—verses which may well come to be regarded as the chief of the war's bequests to poetry.

On 18th June the younger Moltke died, at the age of sixty-eight. As Chief of the German Staff at the opening of the war he had been responsible for taking from its pigeon-hole the famous plan which Germany had been working at for so many years. That plan failed utterly at the Marne and Ypres, and Moltke was succeeded by the younger and abler Falkenhayn, to whom fell the difficult task of revising the whole German scheme and organizing his country for that war of endurance of which she had never dreamed. The death of this bearer of a famous name and exponent of the traditional German strategy had at the moment a dramatic significance. It marked the end of the long second stage of the war in the West, the stage in which Germany had held her lines by virtue of a superior machine. For, while the Canadians were struggling at Ypres for a few hundred yards of swamp, and the tide of assault at Verdun was breaking on the bastion of the French defence, in Picardy the Allied guns were massing, and great armies were making ready for an implacable offensive.

CHAPTER LIV.

THE POLITICAL SITUATION.

February 10–*June* 24, 1916.

The Operation of the Military Service Act in Britain—The British Budget of 1916—Germany's Finances—Death of Galliéni—Resignation of Tirpitz—America's Ultimatum to Germany—The Easter Rebellion in Ireland.

DURING the early months of 1916 there was a more optimistic temper abroad in the West than had been known since the preceding spring. Even the fall of Kut failed to shake this composure—perhaps because the disasters of the second half of 1915 had driven most men to write off from the Allied assets the various divergent operations in the East. The desperation of Germany's offensives, her boasting—so loud that it suggested an uneasy mind—her summons to her opponents to "look at the map" and admit her victory, seemed to argue some loss of grip on the situation. Public cheerfulness was increased by the superb French stand at Verdun. Here was a case of Germany using all her peculiar strength on one narrow section and failing to force it. Her losses, even in the eyes of the most sceptical, were not far short of those of the defence. If the mighty machine which had blown up the Russian front on the Donajetz a year before could do no better than this, it looked as if its days were numbered. The Allies were now on a level with their enemy in *matériel*, and they had the greater total number of men. They believed that the fighting quality of their infantry was at least as good, and it appeared that they had the saner strategical plan.

Part of the restored confidence—in Britain, at any rate—was due to a better feeling towards the much-criticized civil Government. The Cabinet had taken certain steps, long overdue, towards making the nation a true partner in the war. Policy, so far as it concerned the blockade, the war in the air, and the conduct of the Navy, had been debated frankly in Parliament, and criticism, since it was given a fair outlet, lost its danger and gained in prac-

tical value. The passing of the new Military Service Act had satisfied the national conscience, though it was clear that its imperfections would have to be remedied by a more comprehensive measure. The worst difficulties with Labour seemed to be over, and, broadly speaking, the mind of the nation was occupied with certain definite points of administrative reform rather than with a general feeling of satiety towards its governors. Critics, to be sure, remained who pounced upon the foibles of politicians and pleaded for a "clean sweep." Their devotion to some strong, simple saviour of his country made them dredge deep in political and non-political life to find their ideal. But such an attitude was in reality a form of mysticism, analogous to the old quest for a panacea. It was a mood of imaginative rhetoric rather than of common sense. In the name of practical politics they sought something which was notably unpractical. For the man of destiny is the gift of God, and is not to be found by painful seeking. When he comes it is silently and without advertisement, and his own people commonly know him not.

So far as the fighting services were concerned, the nation at large looked with composure and confidence on the admirals at sea and the generals in the field. It recognized that staff work had at last been rated at its proper value, and the stalwart figure of Sir William Robertson was a guarantee that empiricism should no more rule our general strategy. But it was also becoming widely felt that staff work was necessary too for civilian administration, and was especially needful for those intricate problems which would face the country at the conclusion of peace. The principles with which the war had been entered upon were still unshaken in esteem; clamorous events had not yet called for a revision of war ideals. The interest of the Allies was still centred upon practical needs, but they now envisaged these needs as extending beyond hostilities. One section in Britain seemed to hold the schoolboy view that all that was required was to give Germany a beating, shake hands, and live happily with her ever afterwards. That was not the view of those most familiar with German methods, and it was certainly not the view of the French. They knew that Germany would never be so dangerous as in the period of apparent quiescence produced by her defeat, and that much that was gained by war might be lost to the Allies in the first twelve months after peace. It was known that she had made far-reaching plans, after her patient fashion, to meet the financial, economic, and political difficulties that would confront her, and it was very certain that

Britain, absorbed in departmental activities, had no scheme to counter these. Lord Haldane raised the question in the House of Lords, and the Prime Minister promised that a " Peace Book " on the analogy of the " War Book " of a General Staff would be prepared. But no adequate machinery was provided for its preparation, and if the matter was to be left to the odd men and the scanty leisure of the various departments it was clear that the result would be farcical. There was a real national anxiety that our unreadiness for war should not be matched by a like unreadiness for peace. A certain impulse in the direction of forethought and organization was given by the visit of Mr. Hughes, the Prime Minister of the Australian Commonwealth and the most prominent leader of Labour in the Empire. In a series of speeches he warned his countrymen to take heed that what was won by the valour of the fleets and armies did not slip from slack civilian hands. The warning was opportune and effective, for this was a fresh voice, speaking an honest message very different from the plangent commonplaces of its later manner. Britain was weary of the kind of thinking which is done only under the goad of an unlooked-for necessity.

The coming into operation of the Military Service Act on February 10, 1916, did not end the recruiting difficulties. The work of granting exemptions lay with the local tribunals, and they showed a wide latitude in the interpretation of their duties. In some rural districts the able-bodied sons of farmers suddenly appeared as shepherds and cowmen, demanding and receiving exemption. The War Office was compelled to press for a revision of the list of reserved occupations, and new instructions had to be issued to the tribunals. There was trouble, too, with that typical British product, the conscientious objector. Logically, his position was impossible. He claimed the rights and declined the most urgent duty of citizenship, and chose in effect to declare himself an outlaw from the commonweal. Repugnance to military service was to be expected from many ; but in order to provide a respectable cloak for such shrinking, the obscure side-chapels of religion and politics suddenly found their votaries many times multiplied. It was no easy task to separate from such claimants the *bona fide* objectors and the charlatans, and blunders and hardships were inevitable. The brazen shirker often emerged triumphant, while the man of honest, if invalidish, conscience was penalized. The thing was presently to become a scandal, which, because it affected the very few, was unrealized by the

nation. The genuine conscientious objector was, in many cases, denied even his legal rights, and a number of sincere and honourable, if abnormal, beings were subjected to a persecution which could be justified on no conceivable grounds of law, ethics, or public policy.

But at the moment the main trouble arose from the position of the married men, who had registered in the Derby scheme under the impression that no married men would be called up so long as any single men remained unattested. In the rush and confusion of that campaign, which had had something of the old electioneering business about it, wild promises had been made by canvassers which now recoiled on the Government's head. Lord Derby was justified in claiming that his pledge to the married men had been strictly fulfilled—the Military Service Act had been passed to bring in the single men ; and the married men who had attested had done so with full knowledge that they would be called up. But it was difficult for a married man to see hordes of the single creeping into reserved occupations, while he, owing to his patriotism, was being put to a serious economic loss. The discontent became so grave that the calling up of the married groups was postponed, and the Cabinet was forced to find some way out of the difficulty. There was the further fact that even the Military Service Act would scarcely provide the numbers needed to raise our field force to the desired level, and to keep it there. The military authorities furnished a note of their requirements, and declined to depart from it.

There was obviously no way of getting rid of the practical injustice caused by the various tentatives of the past months except by an impartial conscription of all men of military age, whether married or single. But the Cabinet was slow to come to this decision. They agreed upon a scheme of " contingent compulsion," which meant that if after a certain period sufficient men were not recruited by ordinary enlistment, Parliament would be asked for compulsory powers. They also proposed to prolong the service of time-expired men till the end of the war, to bring all youths under the Military Service Act as soon as they reached the age of eighteen, and to transfer men enlisted for territorial battalions to any unit where they might be needed. At a two days' secret session of the House of Commons these projects were submitted, and confidential information was given to members as to the exact military requirements of the nation. But when, on 22nd April, leave to introduce the new Bill was asked for, the scheme was

promptly rejected. The Labour members themselves disowned it as unjust and feeble, and demanded, now that the necessity had arisen, the straight course of "equal sacrifice." On 3rd May the Prime Minister introduced a Bill to extend, as from 24th June, the provisions of the Military Service Act to all unattested married men. From that date every male British subject ordinarily resident in Great Britain, and between the ages of eighteen and forty-one, was to be deemed duly enlisted in the regular army for the duration of the war. The third reading of the Bill was carried by a majority of 250 to 35, and it received the Royal assent on 25th May. In a message issued on that day the King expressed to his people his recognition of the patriotism and self-sacrifice which had raised already by voluntary enlistment no less than 5,041,000 men—"an effort far surpassing that of any other nation in similar circumstances recorded in history, and one which will be a lasting source of pride to future generations."

Voluntary enlistment had, indeed, done marvels, and it was well that the world should have seen so notable a proof of the British temper. But its work was done, and, unless endless hardships were to be caused, it must be replaced by a different system. The long controversy was over, conscription was the law of the land, and the sum total of British manhood was at the disposal of the State. Moreover, the revolution was whole-hearted, and met with only the slenderest opposition. Such a change, it is probable, could not have been wrought by any sweeping or heroic measures in the early days of the war. It needed time for opinion to ripen and the necessities of the case to force themselves upon the public mind. But it is very certain that the country was ready for the step long before the Cabinet had screwed up its courage. In this matter the leaders lagged behind their followers in nerve and seriousness. The people of Britain surrendered what some chose to call their "birthright" of voluntaryism not because the Government demanded the sacrifice, but because they forced it on the Government. Had the rulers been a little closer to the nation many heart-breaking delays would have been saved, and much needless waste in money and men.

The Budget, which was introduced by the British Chancellor of the Exchequer on 4th April, was mainly an increase in existing taxes—a series of fresh cuts from the old joints. The expenditure for the year 1915–16 had been 1,559 millions, 31 millions less than the estimate; the revenue was 337 millions, 32 millions in excess

of the estimate. This left a deficit of 1,222 millions, which had been made good for the present by the various war loans, the sale of Exchequer Bonds and Treasury Bills, and the Anglo-French-American loan. For the coming year Mr. McKenna estimated the total expenditure at 1,825 millions, the total revenue at 502 millions, leaving a deficit to be met by borrowing of 1,323 millions. The new taxes included an impost on tickets of admission to various amusements, and taxes on matches and mineral waters; the rate of income tax for earned and unearned incomes was increased; the duties on sugar, cocoa, and coffee were raised; and the excess profits tax was advanced from 50 per cent. to 60 per cent. This enlarged taxation was boldly but not very scientifically conceived, since it laid too great a share of the extra burden on the professional and middle classes. There was justice in the complaint that more of the revenue might have been raised by indirect taxation. But a time of war allows small leisure for fiscal reform, and statesmen not unnaturally tend to follow what for the moment is the line of least resistance.

The Chancellor of the Exchequer permitted himself a forecast of the situation at the end of 1916–17. Our permanent revenue, leaving out the temporary yield of the excess profits tax, would then be 423 millions, our total indebtedness 3,440 millions, which, deducting the 800 millions advanced to the Allies and Dominions, left a net debt of 2,640 millions. Allowing for a sinking fund, this meant an annual debt charge of 145 millions. These enormous sums dazzled the eyes of the ordinary man, and left him giddy. It was impossible to base any reasoned view of the financial position on figures which so far transcended all past experience and calculation. But it was none the less true that, in comparison with former crises, and taking into account the total wealth and earning capacity of the nation, the colossal expenditure was still within our means. We were conducting our war finance generally on sound principles. While Germany proposed to raise at the outside 24 millions by special taxation, we had obtained from the same source, in the first twenty months of war, over 146 millions, and in 1916–17 we were raising over 300 millions. Our system of credit had stood the unparalleled strain, and our banking methods were vindicated beyond question in the eyes of the most querulous critic. The balance against us in foreign trade remained our chief difficulty, but we had done something in the past year to adjust it. One remarkable phenomenon was the revival of our export trade, in spite of the fact that our internal industries were being carried

on with less than half of their normal man-power. The economic position of Britain, when it was remembered to how large an extent she bore also the burdens of her Allies, was in many ways not the least of the surprises of the war.

The student who turned to Germany found a very different state of affairs. Her pre-war organization had made her financial problem simple, but nothing could make the simplicity sound. Her four ingeniously manipulated loans had raised a large sum on paper, but she had provided scarcely any additional annual revenue to meet the enormous debt charge. She had increased her paper circulation by over 700 millions, while Britain had only found it necessary to increase hers by 100 millions. She was importing from neutrals, but she had few exports with which to pay for imports. The decline in the value of the mark in neutral markets—an average depreciation of 29 per cent.—showed that her industrial output was shrinking, as more and more men were taken for the field. The German Minister of Finance, Dr. Helfferich, made a speech in the Reichstag on 16th March in which he endeavoured to justify German methods. He took credit that his country had not imitated the British practice of new taxation, but had followed "the principles of orderly Imperial housekeeping," whatever these might be. But in the next breath he pleaded for new taxes, since "we cannot demand or accept milliards from a people which for the fourth time, in ardent patriotism and confidence, offers its savings to the Empire, unless we assure the due payment of interest." On this it might have been observed that the amount of new taxation proposed did not come within measurable distance of paying that interest. He criticized the British fashion of short-term debts, which he estimated at nearly 750 millions, including in this sum Exchequer Bonds, which had a five-year currency, as well as the American Loan. But Germany's own short-term debt at the end of February exceeded 800 millions. Moreover, the British system of continuous loans by bill or bond was a sound one: it represented a real subscription of existing funds; whereas the big German long-term loan was largely a creation of artificial bank credits. Finally, he boasted that Germany was only spending half the sum that Britain spent daily on the war. In 1916 our daily expenditure was close on 5 millions, that of France about $2\frac{1}{2}$ millions, that of Russia just over 3 millions, and that of Italy something under 1 million. But he omitted to mention the fact that the British figures included separation allowances and loans to the Allies, which the German did not, and these items between

them came to little less than 1½ millions per day. Germany had to carry Austria, Bulgaria, and Turkey on her shoulders, and it was probable that her daily outlay, direct and indirect, was nearly equal to that of Britain.

The spring months of 1916 saw changes in the *personnel* of various governments. In Russia Polivanov, whose liberal views offended the autocracy, was succeeded as Minister of War by General Schuvaiev; M. Goremykin, the Premier, resigned, and his place was filled by a comparatively unknown man, M. Boris Stürmer. The Duma was reopened by the Emperor on 22nd February after its long prorogation, and the occasion was remarkable for a review of the situation in foreign affairs by M. Sazonov, and eloquent expressions of the national resolution by the President, M. Rodzianko, and the new Prime Minister. In these speeches an appeal was made to the different schools of politics to let disputable questions of internal reform sleep for the moment, and close their ranks against the common enemy. But there was something academic in the eloquence; national unity was spoken of as a thing substantially in existence, and national strength as that which might be impaired but could never be broken; there were few to read the omens right, and to dread, like Napoleon, the crows around the Kremlin. In France Galliéni was compelled by ill-health to leave the Ministry of War. On 27th May he died, and was mourned by his country as Britain had mourned for Lord Roberts. He was pre-eminently the veteran soldier of France, whose career made a continuous link between her deepest humiliation and her greatest glory. He had fought in the war of 1870, and as the maker of French West Africa, Tonkin, and Madagascar had won high honour during the decades before 1914. When the great struggle came his health kept him back from the actual battle-front; but as Governor of Paris in that hectic first week of September 1914 he had done much to make possible the victory of the Marne, and his grave and single-hearted courage had been an inspiration to his people.

In the early part of March there had been remarkable changes at the German Marineamt. Tirpitz resigned on the nominal plea of ill-health, and was succeeded by his former subordinate, Admiral von Capelle. The news caused a sensation not only throughout the rest of Europe, but in Germany itself. To the ordinary German Tirpitz was the author and conductor of that submarine campaign which atoned in the popular mind for the inertia of the High Sea

Fleet, and the exponent of that ruthlessness in maritime warfare which must some day shatter the naval pride of Britain. The reason for his fall was the character of the man. He was obstinate and short-sighted, a hopeless colleague for a *politique* like the Imperial Chancellor. He was a confirmed intriguer, and, like some distinguished sailors elsewhere, had at his bidding an obedient *claque* of journalists. As the situation with America grew more difficult and delicate it was clearly impossible to have so reckless and headstrong an administrator at the head of the most controversial department in the service. The fall of Tirpitz was a triumph for the more cautious Bethmann-Hollweg. But, as has happened before in history, while the Minister went his policy remained. The importance of submarine ruthlessness was so deeply set in the popular mind that the Government dared not slacken in their efforts. Two Dutch liners, the *Tubantia* and the *Palembang*, were torpedoed without warning. Finally, on 24th March, came, as we have already seen, one of the most flagrant outrages in the history of the war—the sinking by a submarine of the Channel steamer *Sussex*. A number of American citizens were among the victims, and Washington asked Berlin for explanations. The German Government replied by casting doubt upon the origin of the disaster—a doubt which America was soon in a position by indisputable evidence to dispel.

On 19th April President Wilson made a speech in Congress which trenchantly indicted the whole German policy of submarine warfare. He returned to the thesis laid down in the first *Lusitania* Note, and since then overlaid by special pleas, that the submarine was not an admissible weapon for commerce destruction. It was "grossly evident that warfare of such a sort, if warfare it be, cannot be carried on without the most palpable violation of the dictates alike of right and humanity. . . . The use of submarines for the destruction of an enemy's commerce is of a necessity, because of the very character of the vessels employed and the very methods of attack which their employment as of course involves, incompatible with the principles of humanity, the long-established and incontrovertible rights of neutrals, and the sacred immunities of non-combatants." He ended by declaring that he considered it his duty to inform Germany that "unless the Imperial German Government should now immediately declare and effect an abandonment of its present methods of warfare against passenger and freight vessels, the Government can have no choice but to

sever diplomatic relations with the Government of the German Empire altogether." The night before a Note in these terms had been sent by Mr. Lansing to Berlin.

Here was at last the true ultimatum, which admitted of no misinterpreting. The Tirpitz policy of ruthlessness must be relinquished in theory and practice, or America would join the belligerent Allies. The German reply, published on 4th May, was of the familiar type—a plea in confession and avoidance. It claimed that Germany had exercised a "far-reaching restraint" on her submarine warfare, solely in the interests of neutrals. It declared that this warfare could not be dispensed with, since it had been undertaken "in self-defence against the illegal conduct of Britain while fighting a bitter struggle for national existence." But it announced a concession. The German naval force was to "receive the following orders for submarine warfare in accordance with the general principle of visit, search, and destruction of merchant vessels recognized by international law. Such vessels, both *within and without the area declared as a naval war zone*, shall not be sunk without warning, and without saving human life, unless the ship attempt to escape and offer resistance." In return for this favour Germany expected that America "will now also consider all impediments removed which may have lain in the way of neutral co-operation towards the restoration of the freedom of the seas," and "will now demand and insist that the British Government shall forthwith observe the rules of international law universally recognized before the war," in the matter of interference with sea-borne commerce.

In the connection in which it was delivered the reply could only be construed as a specific abandonment of the policy of "ruthlessness." It was so interpreted by the United States. In his reply of 8th May, Mr. Wilson accepted the "Imperial Government's abandonment of a policy which had so seriously menaced the good relations of the two countries," and added that he relied upon its "scrupulous execution." As for Germany's attempt to acquire something in return for her concession the President did not mince matters. "The Government of the United States notifies the Imperial Government that it cannot for a moment entertain, much less discuss, the suggestion that respect by the German naval authorities for the right of citizens of the United States upon the high seas should in any way, or in the slightest degree, be made contingent upon the conduct of any other government as affecting the rights of neutrals and non-combatants.

The responsibility in such matters is single not joint, absolute not relative." *

A diplomatic correspondence is to be read in the light of its attendant circumstances. Germany's reply and America's counter-reply, made in a time of great international strain, and in precise language, constituted something very different from the looser discussions of the previous year. The belief seemed to be justified that the American President had spoken his last word, and that, if his conditions were not fulfilled, a breach between the two Powers would follow without further *pourparlers*. That Germany should be willing to relinquish a policy so loudly proclaimed and so popular with the nation at large, argued that the influence of the Imperial Chancellor and the *politiques* was for the moment predominant, and that he and his friends were beginning to envisage the future with a certain sobriety.

But when we turn to the speeches of Bethmann-Hollweg during these months, we shall find no abatement of intransigence nor any just appraisement of the situation. He shrilly upbraided the Allies for refusing to recognize when they were beaten. He implored them to look at the map; as if the extent of occupied territory constituted a decision. The more far-flung the lines of an army the greater its ultimate destruction if its strength fails. He repeated the legend about Germany having entered upon war solely for the protection of her unity and freedom. All she sought, he said, was a Germany so strong that no one in the future would be tempted to seek to destroy her. And then he preached his own doctrine of nationality. Did any one suppose that Germany would ever surrender to the rule of reactionary Russia the peoples she had liberated "between the Baltic Sea and the Volhynian swamps"? As for Belgium, there could be no *status quo ante*. "Germany cannot again give over to Latinization the long-oppressed Flemish race." The British Prime Minister had declared that the first condition of peace was the complete and final destruction of the military power of Prussia. But that, said Bethmann-Hollweg, is the same thing as our unity and freedom. The confession was significant. It was precisely because Germany defined that unity and freedom in terms of Prussian militarism that peace could only come with the latter's destruction.

Some weeks later Sir Edward Grey, in an interview with an American journalist, sketched another kind of freedom. "What

* The same principle had been laid down in the American reply to the German Note of July 8, 1915.

we and our Allies are fighting for is a free Europe. We want a Europe free, not only from the domination of one nationality by another, but free from hectoring diplomacy and the peril of war; free from the constant rattling of the sword in the scabbard, from perpetual talk of shining armour and War Lords. . . . What Prussia proposes is Prussian supremacy. She proposes a Europe modelled and ruled by Prussia. She is to dispose of the liberties of her neighbours and of us all. We say that life on those terms is intolerable. . . . Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg affirms that Great Britain wants to destroy 'united and free Germany.' We never were smitten with any such madness. We should be glad to see the German people free, as we ourselves want to be free, and as we want the other nationalities of Europe and of the world to be free. It belongs to the rudiments of political science, it is abundantly taught by history, that you cannot enslave a people and make a success of the job—that you cannot kill a people's soul by foreign despotism and brutality. We aspire to embark upon no such course of folly and futility towards another nation. We believe that the German people, when once the dreams of world empire cherished by pan-Germanism are brought to nought, will insist upon the control of its Government; and in this lies the hope of secure freedom and national independence in Europe. . . . The Prussian authorities have apparently but one idea of peace—an iron peace imposed upon other nations by German supremacy. They do not understand that free men and free nations will rather die than submit to that ambition, and that there can be no end to war till it is defeated and renounced."

In a chronicle of war domestic politics are only to be touched on in so far as they have a bearing on the campaign. But it is necessary to devote a short space to one episode, the roots of which lay deep in old political controversies—an adventure which, as it happened, ended in a fiasco, but which in its inception was definitely linked to the main struggle. Fruitless volumes might be written in an endeavour to trace the full historical origin of the Irish rebellion of Easter week, 1916. So far five hundred years of experiments had failed to make Ireland an integral part of Britain. There had been opportunities—golden opportunities some of them—but they had been missed or declined. Till half a century ago Ireland had been penalized; since then she had been partly scolded and partly coddled; but the treatment had always been differential. No opportunity had been given for the land to grow up into that

equal and like-minded partnership which means unity as well as union. As a consequence Britain had grown weary of the subject, and had almost relinquished the attempt in despair. The air had become thick with paradox and sentiment; the Irishman whom Britain despaired of, the Englishman whom Ireland detested, were alike creatures of an imaginative convention; the realities of national character could not be discerned through the mist of propaganda. Sane men had reached the conclusion that any course would be better than to leave Ireland to be angled for by British political parties and made the gambling counter in a worthless game. If an incorporating union had failed, there might remain the chance of a looser federal tie, under which the Irish people could attain that national maturity which had hitherto been denied them. But while it is hard to unite, it is often not less difficult to disentangle, and with the first talk of a separatist policy it became clear that Ireland was not, strictly speaking, a unit at all. If three-fourths of the land were ready to renounce the incorporating union, the strong and serious Scoto-Irish stock of the North was not less resolved to cling to it.

As we have seen, the outbreak of the war with Germany called a truce between the official combatants—a truce honourably observed by the respective leaders. Sir Edward Carson and Mr. Redmond flung themselves into the work of recruiting, and Ireland's well-wishers hoped that the partnership of North and South in the field might bring about a sense of a common nationality. Germany had counted much on Irish disloyalty and disunion. Her merchants had supplied arms on the most moderate terms to Ulstermen and Nationalists alike, and when, at the end of July 1914, a riot broke out in Dublin and British troops came into conflict with the mob, one of her principal agents had telegraphed that the hour had struck. As matters shaped themselves, her anticipation was falsified. But as the months passed it became apparent that there were certain smouldering ashes in Ireland which, judiciously fanned, might kindle into a blaze. Treason was preached openly by word and pen, and little notice was taken of it by the authorities. Recruiting was obstructed with impunity to the obstructors. German money was spent freely, and a nucleus of disaffection was found in the organization called Sinn Fein, which owed no allegiance to any of the recognized Irish parties.

Sinn Fein—which means "Ourselves"—was a body founded some sixteen years before by a section of extreme Nationalists, who had lost faith in the Irish Parliamentary party. It advocated

as its aim something not unlike Austro-Hungarian dualism, and as means passive resistance to all British interference, a boycott of British goods, and—with a wiser inspiration—the development of Irish crafts and industries and a distinctive Irish literature. For long it was a harmless academic movement, much frowned on by the politicians, and drawing its strength chiefly from the enthusiasts of Irish art and poetry. In a loose and incoherent way it stood for the same ideal as Sir Horace Plunkett, who urged his countrymen to find salvation in their own efforts rather than in the caprices of the parliamentary game. But after the outbreak of war it took to itself sinister allies, the extremists came to the top, and the spirit of the organization became definitely anti-British. The Irish Government, in spite of repeated warnings, did little or nothing to check the movement. Mr. Birrell, the Chief Secretary, had consistently adopted the principle that till Home Rule arrived no rule was the best substitute, and his Under-secretary shared these enlightened views.

Sir Roger Casement, formerly a British consular officer, who had before the war identified himself with the extreme Nationalist party, presently left for Germany, where he hotly espoused the German cause. He was given the task of going round the prisoners' camps in the attempt to form an Irish Brigade, but to the eternal glory of the Irish soldier his overtures met for the most part with scorn and derision. Ultimately Germany grew tired of her ally, and called on him to make good his promise of raising an Irish revolt. She had no confidence in the success of the adventure, but she hoped that sufficient din would be raised to attract a number of British troops to Ireland, and she was prepared to support the gambler's throw with a bombardment by her battle-cruiser squadron at some point on the East Anglian coast. Casement was in a tragic quandary. Futile and suspect, he was forced by his cynical employers into an enterprise which he knew must fail, and in the failure of which he would assuredly find his death.

Late on the evening of 20th April a German vessel, disguised as a Dutch trader and laden with arms, together with a German submarine, arrived off the Kerry coast, not far from Tralee. Every detail of their voyage from the day they left Germany was known to our Naval Intelligence Department. The vessel was stopped by a British patrol boat and ordered to follow to Queenstown harbour. On the way she hoisted the German flag and sank herself, her crew being taken prisoners. Meantime Sir Roger Casement and two companions were put ashore from the submarine in a

collapsible boat. The local Sinn Feiners failed to meet them, and Casement was arrested early on Good Friday morning, 21st April, and taken to England.*

The capture of their leader upset the plans of the rebels in Dublin. On the Saturday the Easter manœuvres of the Sinn Fein Volunteers were hastily cancelled; but so much incriminating evidence was abroad that they decided that the boldest game was the safest. On Easter Monday, while a half-hearted attack was made on the Castle, armed bands seized St. Stephen's Green, the Post Office, the Law Courts, and part of Sackville Street. Troops were hastily brought in from the Curragh, field batteries shelled the rebel headquarters, a cordon of soldiers was stretched round the centre of the city, and martial law was proclaimed. On Wednesday a Territorial brigade, the 178th, consisting of battalions of the Sherwood Foresters, arrived from England, and next day Sir John Maxwell, who had returned from the command in Egypt, was given plenary power to deal with the situation. Bit by bit the rebels were driven out of their strongholds, and by Saturday they were surrendering in batches. By Monday, 1st May, it was announced that the revolt in Dublin was crushed, and the outbreaks in Enniscorthy, Athenry, Clonmel, and other country districts were dying down. Fifteen of the leaders were tried by court-martial and shot, and a number of others condemned to varying terms of imprisonment. The military casualties were 521 of all ranks, including seventeen officers killed. There were nearly 800 civilian casualties—many of them insurgents—including at least 180 dead.

This tragic episode had small bearing on the war. From the start it was what Horace Walpole called the most futile of things, a "rebellion on the defensive." Wearers of the British uniform, some of them returning wounded from the front, were shot down in cold blood, and there were, unhappily, instances of the childish, light-hearted cruelty, not unknown in Irish history, in this tawdry Commune. Not thus was the conduct of the Wild Geese who fought in Clare's Brigade, or the Jacobites who followed the Chevalier to Culloden. Sympathy and respect must be denied to men who, however natural their estrangement from Britain, were fighting in virtual alliance with a Power which had proclaimed herself the enemy of all liberty and all nationality. But unhappily the barbarism was not wholly on one side. The British Govern-

* He was ultimately tried for high treason and condemned to death, and was hanged on 3rd August.

ment dabbled alternately in mercy and severity. Either the law should have been strictly enforced, or—which would have been the wiser plan—so pitiful an escapade should have been followed by a generous amnesty, as in De Wet's rebellion. For the rising contained in its ranks a large number of febrile and perverted idealists, and it was partly the blame of Britain that such idealism was not turned to noble uses. The corner-boy who sniped in the Dublin streets was of the same stock as the men who forced the Gallipoli landing. Owing partly to ancient and partly to recent blunders, there was little chance of honest idealism being awakened. While all the world was at war Ireland alone stood aside, self-conscious and ashamed, and such a mood meant that the path was clear for the visionary and the knave.

But while it is right to remember this plea in extenuation, it cannot be pushed too far. The Sinn Feiner was not, indeed, the whole of Ireland. Ulster was staunch as a rock, and there were many thousands, drawn from every corner of the South and West, who were true to their salt and fought in the British lines with a rare gallantry and resolution. Forty-eight hours after the Dublin rising began, the German troops opposite certain Irish battalions in France exhibited notices announcing that the English were shooting down their wives and brothers, and were answered with "Rule Britannia!" A company of the Munster Fusiliers crossed no-man's-land that night, cut the enemy's wire, and brought off the placard in triumph. It was the answer of the best of Ireland, not only to Germany, but to those traitors who would defile her honour at home. But that best was a minority; the bulk of the people stood sullenly aside; Ireland as a whole had dropped out of the brotherhood of nations. Those who would excuse her apathy are faced with a cruel dilemma. Either she approved the German creed and was at variance with the Allied principles; or, possessed with hatred of England and lacking in political vision, she did not discern the meaning of those principles, to which, had she grasped them, she would have assented. The first hypothesis is unthinkable, and the historian is forced back upon the second. The explanation of Ireland's action was not moral obliquity, but blinded eyes and a dulled mind. She was politically immature, and, whether we seek the reason in racial character or historic mischance, in that fact lay her tragedy. She was at variance, not with Britain, but with civilization.

CHAPTER LV.

THE BATTLE OF JUTLAND.

May 30–*June* 5, 1916.

The British Grand Fleet on May 30—Jellicoe's Principles of Naval War—The German Fleet sighted—The Battle-cruiser Action—Arrival and Deployment of Battle Fleet—The Race southward—The Night Action—British and German Losses—The Points in Dispute—Summary of Battle—Death of Lord Kitchener.

(*Maps*, pp. 34, 38, 46.)

FROM the opening of the war British seamen had been sustained by the hope that some day and somewhere they would meet the German High Sea Fleet in a battle in the open sea. It had been their hope since the hot August day when the great battleships disappeared from the eyes of watchers on the English shores. It had comforted them in the long months of waiting amid the winds and snows of the northern waters. Since the beginning of the year 1916 this hope had become a confident belief. There was no special ground for it, except the assumption that as the case of Germany became more difficult she would be forced to use every asset in the struggle. As the onslaught on Verdun grew more costly and fruitless, and as the armies of Russia began to stir with the approach of summer, it seemed that the hour for the gambler's throw might soon arrive.

The long vigil was trying to the nerve and temper of every sailor, and in especial to the Battle Cruiser Fleet, which represented the first line of British sea strength. It was the business of the battle cruisers to make periodical sweeps through the North Sea, and to be first upon the scene should the enemy appear. They were the advance guard, the *corps de choc* of the Grand Fleet; they were the hounds which must close with the quarry and hold it till the hunters of the Battle Fleet arrived. Hence the task of their commander was one of peculiar anxiety and strain. At any moment the chance might come, so he must be sleeplessly watchful. He would have to make sudden and grave decisions, for it was

certain that the longed-for opportunity would have to be forced before it matured. The German hope was by attrition or some happy accident to wear down the superior British strength to an equality with their own. A rash act on the part of a British admiral might fulfil that hope; but, on the other hand, without boldness, even rashness, Britain could not get to grips with her evasive foe. So far Sir David Beatty and the battle cruisers had not been fortunate. From the shelter of the mine-strewn waters around Heligoland Germany's warships made occasional excursions, for they could not rot for ever in harbour; her battle cruisers had more than once raided the English coasts; her battleships had made stately progresses in short circles in the vicinity of the Jutland and Schleswig shores. But so far Sir David Beatty had been unlucky. At the Battle of the Bight of Heligoland on August 28, 1914, his great ships had encountered nothing more serious than enemy light cruisers. At the time of the raid on Hartlepool in December of the same year he had just failed, owing to fog, to intercept the raiders. In the Battle of the Dogger Bank on January 24, 1915, the damage done to his flagship had prevented him destroying the whole German fleet of battle cruisers. It was clear that the enemy, if caught in one of his hurried sorties, would not fight unless he had a clear advantage. Hence, if the battle was to be joined at all, it looked as if the first stage, at all events, must be fought by Britain against odds.

On Tuesday afternoon, 30th May, the bulk of the British Grand Fleet left its bases on one of its customary sweeps. On this occasion it put to sea with hope, for the Admiralty had informed it that a large German movement was contemplated. It sailed in two sections. To the north were twenty-four Dreadnoughts of the Battle Fleet under Sir John Jellicoe—the 1st, 2nd, and 4th Battle Squadrons; one Battle Cruiser Squadron, the 3rd, under Rear-Admiral the Honourable Horace Hood; the 1st Cruiser Squadron, under Rear-Admiral Sir Robert Arbuthnot; the 2nd Cruiser Squadron, under Rear-Admiral Heath; the 4th Light Cruiser Squadron, under Commodore Le Mesurier; and the 4th, 11th, and 12th Destroyer Flotillas. Farther south moved the Battle Cruiser Fleet, under Sir David Beatty—the six vessels of the 1st and 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadrons, under Rear-Admiral Brock and Rear-Admiral Pakenham; the 5th Battle Squadron, four vessels of the *Queen Elizabeth* class, under Rear-Admiral Evan-Thomas; the 1st, 2nd, and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons; and the 1st, 9th, 10th, and 13th Destroyer Flotillas. It will be noticed that the two sections of the Grand

Fleet were not sharply defined by battleships and battle cruisers, for Sir John Jellicoe had with him one squadron of battle cruisers, and Sir David Beatty had one squadron of the largest battleships. On the morning of the last day of May the German High Sea Fleet also put to sea, and sailed north a hundred miles or so from the Jutland coast. First went Admiral von Hipper's battle cruisers, five in number, with the usual complement of cruisers and destroyers. Following them came the Battle Fleet, under Admiral von Scheer —fifteen Dreadnoughts and six older vessels, accompanied by three cruiser divisions and seven torpedo flotillas. With a few exceptions, all the capital ships of the German navy were present in this expedition. We know the purpose of Scheer from his own narrative. He hoped to engage and destroy a portion of the British fleet which might be isolated from the rest, for German public opinion demanded some proof of naval activity now that the submarine campaign had languished.

Sir John Jellicoe, as early as October 1914, had taken into review the new conditions of naval warfare, and had worked out a plan to be adopted when he met the enemy's fleet—a plan approved not only by his flag officers but by successive Admiralty Boards. The German aim, as he forecast it, would be to fight a retreating action, and lead him into an area where they could make the fullest use of mines, torpedoes, and submarines. He was aware of the weakness of his own fleet in destroyers and cruisers, and was resolved not to play the enemy's game. Hence he might be forced to give the appearance of refusing battle and not closing with a retreating foe. "I intend to pursue what is, in my considered opinion, the proper course to defeat and annihilate the enemy's battle fleet without regard to uninstructed opinion or criticism. The situation is a difficult one. It is quite within the bounds of possibility that half of our battle fleet might be disabled by underwater attack before the guns opened fire at all, if a false move is made, and I feel that I must constantly bear in mind the great probability of such attack and be prepared tactically to prevent its success." The German methods had, therefore, from the start a profound moral effect in determining the bias of the Commander-in-Chief's mind. A second principle was always in his thoughts, a principle derived from his view of the general strategy of the whole campaign, for Jellicoe had a wider survey than that of the professional sailor. It was no question of a partiality for the defensive rather than the offensive. The British Grand Fleet, in his view, was the pivot of the Allied strength. So long as it existed

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BATTLE OF JUTLAND: THE AREA OF OPERATIONS.

(*Facing p. 34.*)

(Facing p. 34.)

and kept the sea, it fulfilled its purpose, it had already achieved its main task; if it were seriously crippled, the result would be the loss not of one weapon among many, but of the main Allied armoury. It was, therefore, the duty of a wise commander to bring the enemy to battle—but on his own terms; no consideration of purely naval results, no desire for personal glory, must be allowed to obscure the essential duty of his solemn trusteeship. The psychology of the Commander-in-Chief must be understood, for it played a vital part in the coming action.

The fourth week of May had been hot and bright on shore, with low winds and clear heavens; but on the North Sea there lay a light summer haze, and on the last day of the month loose grey clouds were beginning to overspread the sky. Sir David Beatty, having completed his sweep to the south, had turned north about 2 p.m., according to instructions, to rejoin Jellicoe. The sea was dead calm, like a sheet of glass. His light cruiser squadrons formed a screen in front of him from east to west. But at 2.20 p.m. the *Galatea* (Commodore Alexander-Sinclair), the flagship of the 1st Light Cruiser Squadron, signalled enemy vessels to the east. Beatty at once altered course to south-south-east, the direction of the Horn Reef, in order to get between the enemy and his base.

Five minutes later the *Galatea* signalled again that the enemy was in force, and no mere handful of light cruisers. At 2.35 the watchers in the *Lion* saw a heavy pall of smoke to the eastward, and the course was accordingly altered to that direction, and presently to the north-east. The 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons spread in a screen before the battle cruisers. A seaplane was sent up from the *Engadine* at 3.8, and at 3.30 its first report was received. Flying at a height of 900 feet, within two miles of hostile light cruisers, it was able to identify the enemy. Sir David Beatty promptly formed line of battle, and a minute later came in sight of Hipper's five battle cruisers. Evan-Thomas and the 5th Battle Squadron were at the time more than five miles away, and, since their speed was less than that of the battle cruisers, would obviously be late for the fight; but Beatty did not wait, considering, not unnaturally, that his six battle cruisers were more than a match for Hipper.

I.

Of all human contests, a naval battle makes the greatest demands upon the resolution and gallantry of the men and the skill and

coolness of the commanders. In a land fight the general may be thirty miles behind the line of battle, but the admiral is in the thick of it. He takes the same risks as the ordinary sailor, and, as often as not, his flagship leads the fleet. For three hundred years it had been the special pride of Britain that her ships were ready to meet any enemy at any time on any sea. If this proud boast were no longer hers, then her glory would indeed have departed.

At 3.30 that afternoon Sir David Beatty had to make a momentous decision. The enemy was in all likelihood falling back upon his main Battle Fleet, and every mile the British admiral moved forward brought him nearer to an unequal combat. For the moment the odds were in his favour, since he had six battle cruisers against Hipper's five, as well as the 5th Battle Squadron, but presently the odds might be heavily against him. He was faced with the alternative of conducting a half-hearted running fight with Hipper, to be broken off before the German Battle Fleet was reached, or of engaging closely and hanging on even after the junction with Scheer had been made. In such a fight the atmospheric conditions would compel him to close the range and so lose the advantage of his heavier guns, and his own battle cruisers as regarded turret armour and deck-plating were far less stoutly protected than those of the enemy, which had the armour of a first-class battleship. Sir David Beatty was never for a moment in doubt. He chose the course which was not only heroic, but right on every ground of strategy. Twice already by a narrow margin he had missed bringing the German capital ships to action. He was resolved that now he would forgo no chance which the fates might send.

Hipper was steering east-south-east in the direction of his base. Beatty changed his course to conform, and the fleets were now some 23,000 yards apart. The 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron took station ahead with the destroyers of the 9th and 13th Flotillas; then came the 1st Battle Cruiser Squadron, led by the *Lion;* then the 2nd; and then Evan-Thomas, with the 5th Battle Squadron. Beatty formed his ships on a line of bearing to clear the smoke—that is, each ship took station on a compass bearing from the flagship, of which they were diagonally astern. At 3.48 the action began, both sides opening fire at the same moment. The range was 18,500 yards, the direction was generally south-south-east, and both fleets were moving at full speed, an average perhaps of twenty-five knots. The wind was from the south-east, the visibility for the British was good, and the sun was behind them.

They had ten capital ships to the German five. The omens seemed propitious for victory.

In all battles there is a large element of sheer luck and naked caprice. In the first stage, when Beatty had the odds in his favour, he was destined to suffer his chief losses. A shot struck the *Indefatigable* (Captain Sowerby) in a vital place, the magazine exploded, and in two minutes she turned over and sank. The German gunnery at the start was uncommonly good; it was only later, when things went ill with them, that their shooting fell off. Meantime the 5th Battle Squadron had come into action at a range of 20,000 yards, and engaged the rear enemy ships. From 4.15 onward for half an hour the duel between the battle cruisers was intense, and the enemy fire gradually grew less rapid as ours increased. At 4.18 the German battle cruiser third in the line was seen to be on fire. Presently the *Queen Mary* (Captain Prowse) was hit, and blew up. She had been at the Battle of the Bight of Heligoland; she was perhaps the best gunnery ship in the fleet; and her loss left Beatty with only four battle cruisers. Happily she did not go down before her superb marksmanship had taken toll of the enemy. The haze was now settling on the waters, and all that could be seen of the foe was a blurred outline.

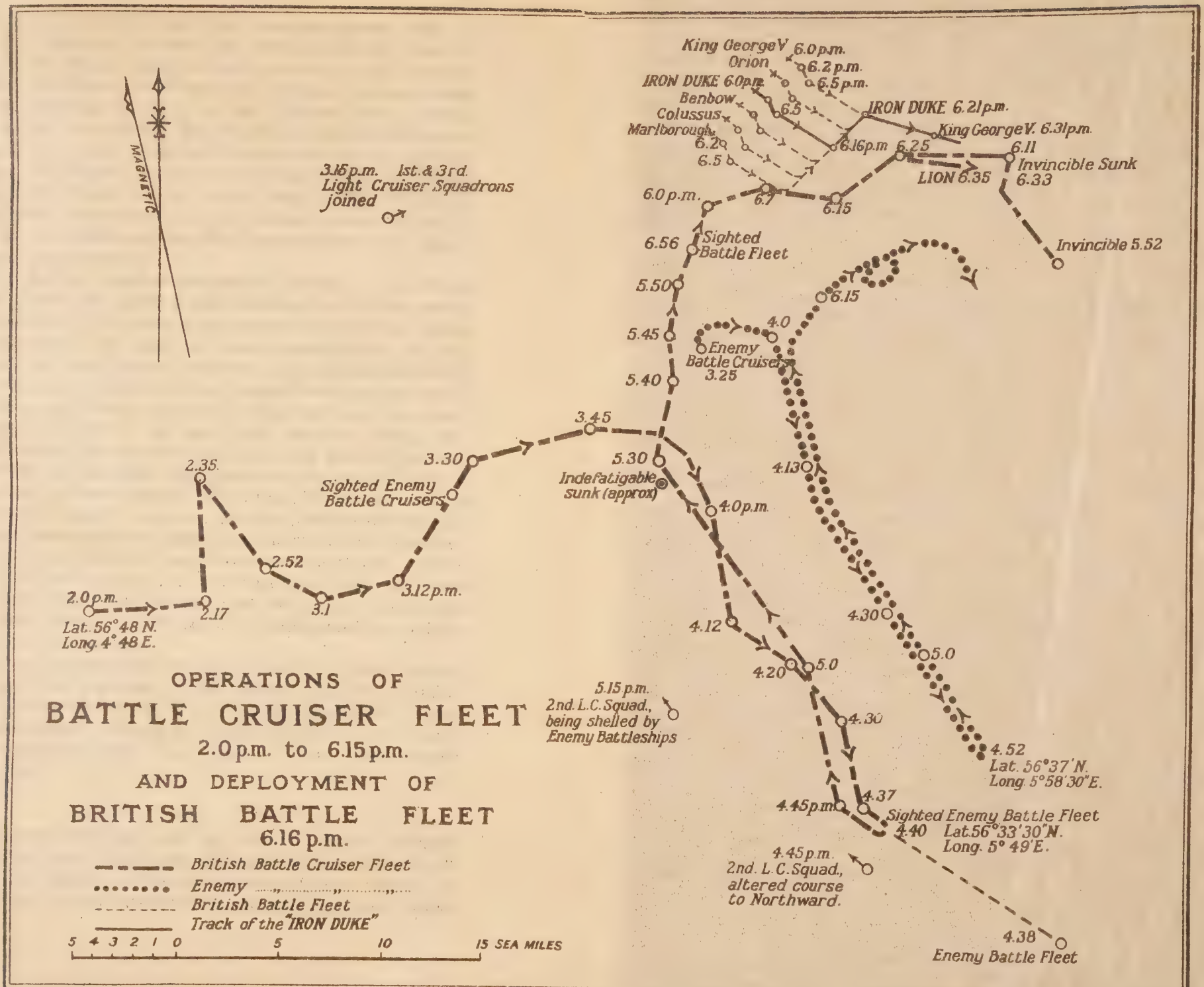
Meantime, as the great vessels raced southwards, the lighter craft were fighting a battle of their own. Eight destroyers of the 13th Flotilla—the *Nestor*, *Nomad*, *Nicator*, *Narborough*, *Pelican*, *Petard*, *Obdurate*, and *Nerissa*—together with the *Moorsom* and *Morris* of the 10th, and the *Turbulent* and *Termagant* of the 9th, moved out at 4.15 for a torpedo attack, at the same time as the enemy destroyers advanced for the same purpose. The British flotilla at once came into action at close quarters with fifteen destroyers and a light cruiser of the enemy, and beat them back with the loss of two destroyers. This combat had made some of them drop astern, so a full torpedo attack was impossible. The *Nestor*, *Nomad*, and *Nicator*, under Commander the Honourable E. B. S. Bingham, fired two torpedoes at the German battle cruisers, and were sorely battered themselves by the German secondary armament. They clung to their task till the turning movement came which we shall presently record, and the result of it was to bring them within close range of many enemy battleships. Both the *Nestor* and the *Nomad* were sunk, and only the *Nicator* regained the flotilla. Some of the others fired their torpedoes, and apparently the rear German ship was struck. The gallantry of these smaller craft cannot be overpraised. That subsidiary battle,

fought under the canopy of the duel of the greater ships, was one of the most heroic episodes of the action.

We have seen that the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron was scouting ahead of the battle cruisers. At 4.38 the *Southampton* (Commodore Goodenough) reported the German battle fleet ahead. Instantly Beatty recalled the destroyers, and at 4.42 Scheer was sighted to the south-east. Beatty put his helm to port and swung round to a northerly course. From the pursuer he had now become the pursued, and his aim was to lead the combined enemy fleets towards Sir John Jellicoe. The 5th Battle Squadron, led by Evan-Thomas in the *Barham*, now hard at it with Hipper, was ordered to follow suit. Meanwhile the *Southampton* and the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron continued forward to observe, and did not turn till within 13,000 yards of Scheer's battleships, and under their fire. At five o'clock Beatty's battle cruisers were steering north, the *Fearless* and the 1st Destroyer Flotilla leading, the 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons on his starboard bow, and the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron on his port quarter. Behind him came Evan-Thomas, attended by the *Champion* and the destroyers of the 13th Flotilla.

It is not difficult to guess at the thoughts of Scheer and Hipper. They had had the good fortune to destroy two of Beatty's battle cruisers, and now that their whole fleet was together they hoped to destroy more. The weather conditions that afternoon made Zeppelins useless, and accordingly they knew nothing of Jellicoe's presence in the north, though they must have surmised that he would appear sooner or later. They believed they had caught Beatty cruising on his own account, and that the gods had delivered him into their hands. From 4.45 till 6 o'clock to the mind of the German admirals the battle resolved itself into a British flight and a German pursuit.

The case presented itself otherwise to Sir David Beatty, who knew that the British Battle Fleet was some fifty miles off, and that it was his business to coax the Germans towards it. He was now facing heavy odds, eight capital ships as against at least nineteen, but he had certain real advantages. He had the pace of the enemy, and this enabled him to overlap their line and to get his battle cruisers on their bow. In the race southwards he had driven his ships at full speed, and consequently his squadron had been in two divisions, for Evan-Thomas's battleships had not the pace of the battle cruisers. But when he headed north he reduced his pace, and there was no longer a tactical division of



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forces. The eight British ships were now one fighting unit. It was Beatty's intention to nurse his pursuers into the arms of Jellicoe, and for this his superior speed gave him a vital weapon. Once the northerly course had been entered upon the enemy could not change direction, except in a very gradual curve, without exposing himself to enfilading fire from the British battle cruisers at the head of the line. Though in a sense he was the pursuer, and so had the initiative, yet as a matter of fact his movements were mainly controlled by Sir David Beatty's will. That the British admiral should have seen and reckoned with this fact in the confusion of a battle against odds is not the least of the proofs of his sagacity and fortitude.

Unfortunately the weather changed for the worse. The British ships were silhouetted against a clear western sky, but the enemy was shrouded in mist, and only at rare intervals showed dim shapes through the gloom. The range was about 14,000 yards. The two leading ships of Evan-Thomas's squadron were assisting the battle cruisers, while his two rear ships were engaged with the first vessels of the German 3rd Battle Squadron, which developed an unexpected speed. As before, the lesser craft played a gallant part. At 5.5 the *Onslow* and the *Moresby*, which had been helping the *Engadine* with the seaplane, took station on the engaged bow of the *Lion*, and the latter struck with a torpedo the sixth ship in the German line and set it on fire. She then passed south to clear the range of smoke, and took station on the 5th Battle Squadron. At 5.33 Sir David Beatty's course was north-north-east, and he was gradually hauling round to the north-eastward. He knew that the Battle Fleet could not be far off, and he was heading the Germans on an easterly course, so that Jellicoe should be able to strike to the best advantage.

At 5.50 on his port bow he sighted British cruisers, and six minutes later had a glimpse of the leading ships of the Battle Fleet five miles to the north. He at once changed course to east and increased speed, bringing the range down to 12,000 yards. He was forcing the enemy to a course on which Jellicoe might overwhelm him.

II.

The first stage was now over, the isolated fight of the battle cruisers, and we must turn to the doings of the Battle Fleet itself. When Sir John Jellicoe at the same time as Beatty took in the *Galatea's* signals, he was distant from the battle cruisers between

fifty and sixty miles. He at once proceeded at full speed on a course south-east by south to join his colleague. The engine rooms made heroic efforts, and the whole fleet maintained a speed in excess of the trial speeds of some of the older vessels. It was no easy task to effect a junction at the proper moment, since there was an inevitable difference in estimating the rendezvous by "reckoning," and some of Beatty's messages, dispatched in the stress of action, were obscure. Moreover, the thick weather made it hard to recognize which ships were enemy and which were British when the moment of meeting came. What a spectacle must that strange rendezvous have presented, had there been any eye to see it as a whole! Two great navies on opposite courses at high speeds driving toward each other: the German unaware of what was approaching; the British Battle Fleet, mile upon mile of steel giants whose van was far out of sight of its rear, twelve miles wrong in its reckoning, and so making contact almost by accident in a drift of smoke and sea-haze!

The 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron, under Rear-Admiral Hood, led the Battle Fleet. At 5.30 Hood observed flashes of gun-fire and heard the sound of guns to the south-westward. He sent the *Chester* (Captain Lawson) to investigate, and at 5.45 this ship engaged three or four enemy light cruisers, rejoining the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron at 6.5. Hood was too far to the south and east, so he turned north-west, and five minutes later sighted Beatty. At 6.11 he received orders to take station ahead, and at 6.22 he led the line, "bringing his squadron into action ahead in a most inspiring manner, worthy of his great naval ancestors." He was now only 8,000 yards from the enemy, and under a desperate fire. At 6.34 his flagship, the *Invincible*, was sunk, and with her perished an admiral who in faithfulness and courage must rank with the nobler figures of British naval history. This was at the head of the British line. Meantime the 1st and 2nd Cruiser Squadrons accompanying the Battle Fleet had also come into action. The *Defence* and the *Warrior* had crippled an enemy light cruiser, the *Wiesbaden*, about six o'clcok. The *Canterbury*, which was in company with the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron, had engaged enemy light cruisers and destroyers which were attacking the destroyers *Shark*, *Acasta*, and *Christopher*—an engagement in which the *Shark* was sunk. At 6.16 the 1st Cruiser Squadron, driving in the enemy light cruisers, had got into a position between the German and British Battle Fleets, since Sir Robert Arbuthnot was not aware of the enemy's approach, owing to the mist, until he was in close prox-

imity to them. The *Defence* perished, and with it Arbuthnot. The *Warrior* passed to the rear disabled, and the *Black Prince* received damage which led later to her destruction.

Meantime Beatty's lighter craft had also been hotly engaged. At 6.5 the *Onslow* sighted an enemy light cruiser 6,000 yards off, which was trying to attack the *Lion* with torpedoes, and at once closed and engaged at a range from 4,000 to 2,000 yards. She then closed the German battle cruisers, but after firing one torpedo she was struck amidships by a heavy shell. Undefeated, she fired her remaining three torpedoes at the enemy Battle Fleet. She was taken in tow by the *Defender*, who was herself damaged, and in spite of constant shelling the two gallant destroyers managed to retire in safety. Again, the 3rd Light Cruiser Squadron, under Rear-Admiral Napier, which was well ahead of the enemy on Beatty's starboard bow, attacked with torpedoes at 6.25, the *Falmouth* and the *Yarmouth* especially distinguishing themselves. One German battle cruiser was observed to be hit and fall out of the line.

The period between 6 o'clock and 6.40 saw the first crisis of the battle. The six divisions of the Grand Fleet had approached in six parallel columns, and it was Jellicoe's business to deploy as soon as he could locate the enemy. A few minutes after six he realized that the Germans were on his starboard side, and in close proximity; he resolved to form line of battle on the port wing column on a course south-east by east, and the order went out at 6.16. His reasons were—to avoid danger in the mist from the German destroyers ahead of their Battle Fleet; to prevent the *Marlborough's* division on the starboard wing from receiving the concentrated fire of the German Battle Fleet before the remaining divisions came into line; and to obviate the necessity of turning again to port to avoid the "overlap" which formation on the starboard wing would give the enemy van. This decision has been vehemently criticized, but without justification. It may well be doubted whether to have formed line towards instead of away from the enemy would have substantially lessened the time of closing the enemy, and it would beyond doubt have exposed the British starboard division to a dangerous concentration of fire. As it was, the *Hercules* in the starboard division was in action within four minutes. The movement took twenty minutes to perform, and during that time the situation was highly delicate. But on the whole it was brilliantly carried out, and by 6.38 Scheer had given up his attempt to escape to the eastward, and was bending due south.

At 5.40 Hipper, under pressure from Evan-Thomas and the destroyers, had turned six points to starboard; at 5.55, being now overlapped by Beatty, who had closed the range, he turned sharp east; at six he bent south; at 6.12 he went about on a N.N.E. course; and about 6.15 he came in contact with Hood's battle cruisers, and realized that Jellicoe had arrived. For a quarter of an hour there was heavy fighting, during which his flagship, the *Lützow*, was badly damaged, and the *Derfflinger* silenced. By 6.33 he was steering due south, followed by Scheer. The turn on interior lines gave him the lead of Beatty, who bent southward on a parallel course. The 1st and 2nd Battle Cruiser Squadrons led; then the 3rd Battle Cruiser Squadron; there followed the six divisions of the Battle Fleet—first the 2nd Battle Squadron, under Vice-Admiral Sir Thomas Jerram; then the 4th, under Vice-Admiral Sir Doveton Sturdee, containing Sir John Jellicoe's flagship, the *Iron Duke;* and finally the 1st, under Vice-Admiral Sir Cecil Burney. Evan-Thomas's 5th Battle Squadron, which had up to now been with Beatty, intended to form ahead of the Battle Fleet, but the nature of the deployment compelled it to form astern. The *Warspite* had her steering-gear damaged, and drifted towards the enemy's line under a furious cannonade. For a little she involuntarily interposed herself between the *Warrior* and the enemy's fire. She was presently extricated; but it is a curious proof of the caprices of fortune in battle that while a single shot at the beginning of the action sank the *Indefatigable*, this intense bombardment did the *Warspite* little harm. Only one gun turret was hit, and her engines were uninjured.

At 6.40, then, the two British fleets were united, the German line was headed off on the east, and Beatty and Jellicoe were working their way between the enemy and his home ports. Scheer and Hipper were now greatly outnumbered, and it seemed as if the British admirals had won a complete strategic success. But the fog was deepening, and the night was falling, and such conditions favoured the German tactics of retreat.

III.

The third stage of the battle—roughly, two hours long—was an intermittent duel between the main fleets. Scheer had no wish to linger, and he moved southwards at his best speed, with the British line shepherding him on the east. He was definitely declining battle. Beatty had succeeded in crumpling up the head of

the German line, and its battleships were now targets for the majority of his battle cruisers. The visibility was becoming greatly reduced. The mist no longer merely veiled the targets, but often shut them out altogether. This not only made gunnery extraordinarily difficult, but prevented the British from keeping proper contact with the enemy. At the same time, such light as there was was more favourable to Beatty and Jellicoe than to Scheer. The German ships showed up at intervals against the sunset, as did Cradock's cruisers off Coronel, and gave the British gunners their chance.

Hipper and his battle cruisers were in serious difficulties. At 6.15 he was compelled to leave the *Lützow*, and since by this time neither the *Derfflinger* nor the *Seydlitz* was fit for flag duties, he remained in a destroyer till a lull in the firing enabled him to board the *Moltke*. From seven o'clock onward Beatty was steering south, and gradually bearing round to south-west and west, in order to get into touch with the enemy. At 7.14 (Scheer having ordered Hipper to close the British again) he sighted them at a range of 15,000 yards—three battle cruisers and two battleships of the *König* class. The sun had now fallen behind the western clouds, and at 7.18 Beatty increased speed to twenty-two knots, and re-engaged. The enemy showed signs of great distress, one ship being on fire and one dropping astern. The destroyers at the head of the line emitted volumes of smoke, which covered the ships behind with a pall, and enabled them at 7.37 to turn away and pass out of Beatty's sight. At that moment he signalled Jellicoe, asking that the van of the battleships should follow the battle cruisers. At 7.58 the 1st and 3rd Light Cruiser Squadrons were ordered to sweep westwards and locate the head of the enemy's line, and at 8.20 Beatty altered course to west to support. He located three battleships, and engaged them at 10,000 yards range. The *Lion* repeatedly hit the leading ship, which turned away in flames with a heavy list to port, while the *Princess Royal* set fire to one battleship, and the third ship, under the attack of the *New Zealand* and the *Indomitable*, hauled out of the line heeling over and on fire. Once more the mist descended and enveloped the enemy, who passed out of sight to the west.

To turn to the Battle Fleet, which had become engaged during deployment with the leading German battleships. It first took course south-east by east; but as it endeavoured to close it bore round to starboard. The aim of Scheer now was escape and nothing but escape, and every device was used to screen his ships from

British sight. Owing partly to the smoke palls and the clouds emitted by the destroyers, but mainly to the mist, it was never possible to see more than four or five enemy ships at a time. The ranges were, roughly, from 9,000 to 12,000 yards, and the action began with the British Battle Fleet in divisions on the enemy's bow. Under the British attack the enemy constantly turned away, and this had the effect of bringing Jellicoe to a position of less advantage on the enemy's quarter. At the same time it put the British fleet between Scheer and his base. In the short periods, however, during which the Germans were visible, they received a heavy fire and were constantly hit. Some were observed to haul out of line, and at least one was seen to sink. The German return fire at this stage was poor, and the damage caused to our battleships was trifling. Scheer relied for defence chiefly on torpedo attacks, which were favoured by the weather and the British position. A following fleet can make small use of torpedoes, as the enemy is moving away from it; while the enemy, on the other hand, has the advantage in this weapon, since his targets are moving towards him. Many German torpedoes were fired, but the only battleship hit was the *Marlborough*, which was, happily, able to remain in line and continue the action.

The 1st Battle Squadron, under Sir Cecil Burney, came into action at 6.17 with the 3rd German Battle Squadron at a range of 11,000 yards; but as the fight continued the range decreased to 9,000 yards. This squadron received most of the enemy's return fire, but it administered severe punishment. Take the case of the *Marlborough* (Captain George P. Ross). At 6.17 she began by firing seven salvos at a ship of the *Kaiser* class; she then engaged a cruiser and a battleship; at 6.54 she was hit by a torpedo; at 7.3 she reopened the action; and at 7.12 fired fourteen salvos at a ship of the *König* class, hitting her repeatedly till she turned out of line. The *Colossus*, of the same squadron, was hit, but only slightly damaged, and several other ships were frequently straddled by the enemy's fire. The 4th Battle Squadron, in the centre, was engaged with ships of the *König* and the *Kaiser* classes, as well as with battle cruisers and light cruisers. Sir John Jellicoe's flagship, the *Iron Duke*, engaged one of the *König* class at 6.30 at a range of 12,000 yards, quickly straddled it, and hit it repeatedly from the second salvo onwards till it turned away. The 2nd Battle Squadron in the van, under Sir Thomas Jerram, was in action with German battleships from 6.30 to 7.20, and engaged also a damaged battle cruiser.

At 7.15, when the range had been closed and line ahead finally formed, came the main torpedo attack by German destroyers. In order to frustrate what he regarded as the most serious danger, Jellicoe ordered a turn of two points to port, and presently a further two points, opening the range by about 1,750 yards. This caused a certain loss of time, and Scheer seized the occasion to turn well to starboard, with the result that contact between the battle fleets was presently lost. Jellicoe received Beatty's appeal at 7.54, and ordered the 2nd Battle Squadron to follow the battle cruisers. But mist and smoke-screens and failing light were fatal hindrances to the pursuit, and even Beatty had soon to give up hope of sinking Hipper's damaged remnant.

By nine o'clock the enemy had completely disappeared, and darkness was falling fast. He had been veering round to a westerly course, and the whole British fleet lay between him and his home ports. It was a strategic situation which, but for the fog and the coming of night, would have meant his complete destruction. Sir John Jellicoe had now to make a difficult decision. It was impossible for the British fleet to close in the darkness in a sea swarming with torpedo craft and possibly with submarines, and accordingly he was compelled to make dispositions for the night which would ensure the safety of his ships and provide for a renewal of the action at dawn. For a night action the Germans were the better equipped as to their fire system, their recognition signals, and their searchlights, and he did not feel justified in presenting the enemy with a needless advantage. On this point Beatty, to the south and westward, was in full agreement. In his own words: "I manœuvred to remain between the enemy and his base, placing our flotillas in a position in which they would afford protection to the fleet from destroyer attack, and at the same time be favourably situated for attacking the enemy's heavier ships." He informed Jellicoe of his position and the bearing of the enemy, and turned to the course of the Battle Fleet.

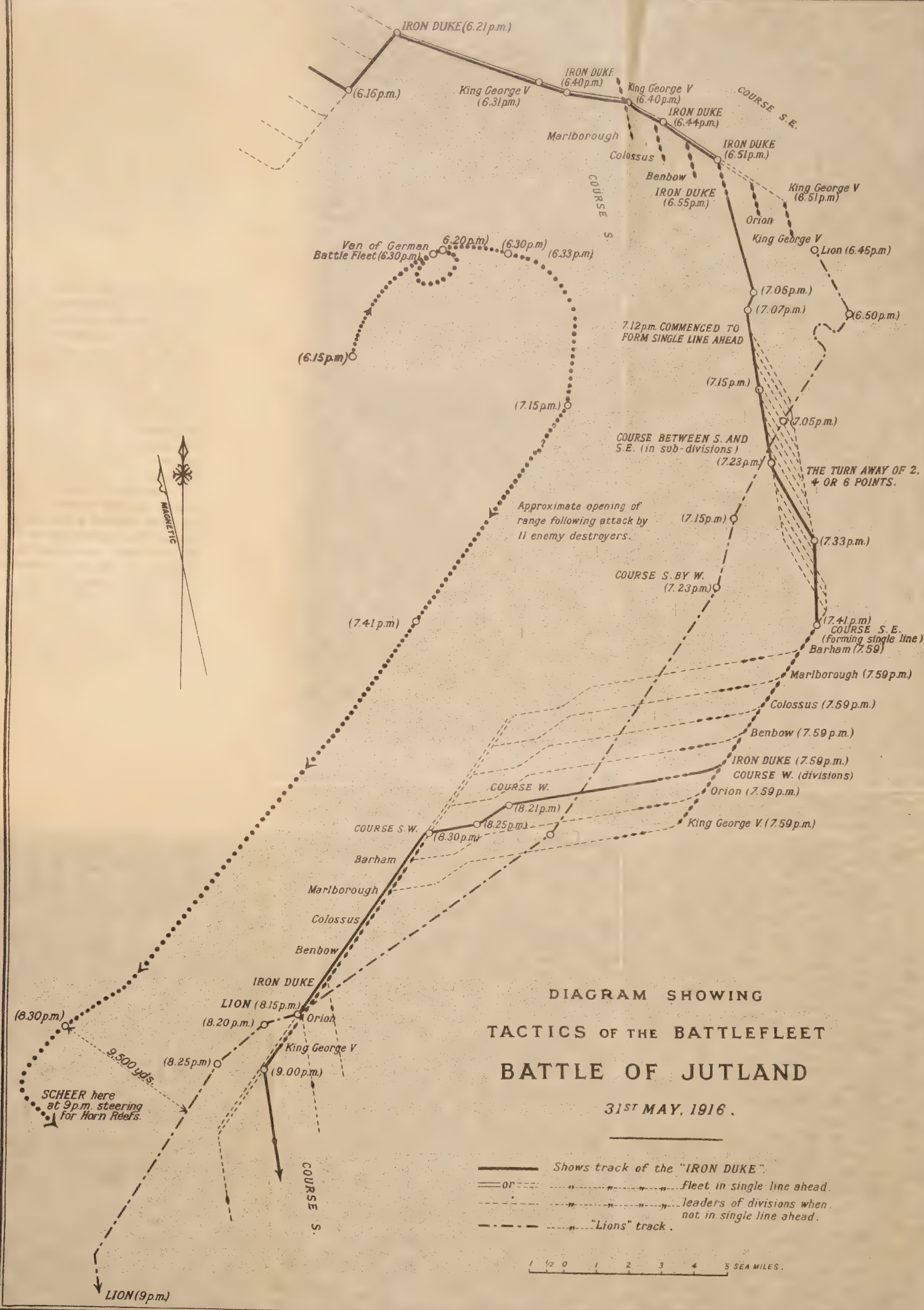
IV.

Jellicoe moved the Battle Fleet on a southerly course, with its four squadrons in four parallel columns a mile apart, so as to keep in touch. The destroyer flotillas were disposed from west to east five miles astern. The battle cruisers and the cruisers lay to the west of the Battle Fleet; the 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron north of it; and the 4th Light Cruiser Squadron to the south. The

main action was over, and Jellicoe was now wholly out of touch with the enemy. His light craft were ordered to attend the Battle Fleet and not to attempt to find touch; hence he was in the position of a warder in the centre of a very broad gate, and an alert enemy had many opportunities of slipping past his flanks.

The night battle was waged on the British side entirely by the lighter craft. It began by an attack on our destroyers by German light cruisers; then at 10.20 an enemy cruiser and four light cruisers came into action with our 2nd Light Cruiser Squadron, losing the *Frauenlob* and severely handling the *Southampton* and the *Dublin*. The 4th Destroyer Flotilla about 11.30 lost the *Sparrowhawk*, and later the *Tipperary*, but at midnight sunk the old battleship *Pommern*. The 12th Flotilla was in action between one and two in the morning, and torpedoed two enemy battleships. The 9th Flotilla lost the *Turbulent*, and after 2 a.m. the 13th Flotilla engaged four *Deutschlands*. The German ships made good their escape, but they lost in the process out of all proportion to the British light craft. No ships in the whole battle won greater glory than these. "They surpassed," wrote Sir John Jellicoe, "the very highest expectations that I had formed of them." An officer on one of the flotillas has described that uneasy darkness: "We couldn't tell what was happening. Every now and then out of the silence would come *bang, bang, boom*, as hard as it could go for ten minutes on end. The flash of the guns lit up the whole sky for miles and miles, and the noise was far more penetrating than by day. Then you would see a great burst of flame from some poor devil, as the searchlight switched on and off, and then perfect silence once more." The searchlights at times made the sea as white as marble, on which the destroyers moved "black," wrote an eye-witness, "as cockroaches on a floor."

At earliest dawn on 1st June the British fleet, which was lying south and west of the Horn Reef, turned northwards to collect its light craft, and to search for the enemy. It was ready and eager to renew the battle, for it had still twenty-two battleships untouched, and ample cruisers and light craft, while Scheer's command was scarcely any longer a fleet in being. But there was to be no second "Glorious First of June," for the enemy was not to be found. He had slipped in single ships astern of our fleet during the night, and was then engaged in moving homewards like a flight of wild duck that has been scattered by shot. He was greatly helped by the weather, which at dawn on 1st June was



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thicker than the night before, the visibility being less than four miles. About 3.30 a.m. a Zeppelin passed over the British fleet, and reported to Scheer the position of the British squadrons. All morning till eleven o'clock Sir John Jellicoe waited on the battleground, watching the lines of approach to German ports, and attending the advent of the enemy. But no enemy came. "I was reluctantly compelled to the conclusion," wrote Sir John, "that the High Sea Fleet had returned into port." Till 1.15 p.m. the British fleet swept the seas, picking up survivors from some of our lost destroyers. After that hour waiting was useless, so the fleet sailed for its bases, which were reached next day, Friday, 2nd June. There it fuelled and replenished with ammunition, and at 9.30 that evening was ready for further action.

V.

The German fleet, being close to its bases, was able to publish at once its own version of the battle. A resounding success was a political necessity for Germany, for she needed a fillip for her new loan, and it is likely that she would have claimed a victory if any remnant of her fleets had reached harbour. As it was, she was overjoyed at having escaped annihilation, and the magnitude of her jubilation may be taken as the measure of her fears. It is of the nature of a naval action that it gives ample scope for fiction. There are no spectators. Victory and defeat are not followed, as in a land battle, by a gain or loss of ground. A well-disciplined country with a strict censorship can frame any tale it pleases, and hold to it for months without fear of detection at home. Germany claimed at once a decisive success. According to her press the death-blow had been given to Britain's command of the sea. The Emperor soared into poetry. "The gigantic fleet of Albion, ruler of the seas, which, since Trafalgar, for a hundred years has imposed on the whole world a bond of sea tyranny, and has surrounded itself with a nimbus of invincibleness, came into the field. That gigantic Armada approached, and our fleet engaged it. The British fleet was beaten. The first great hammer blow was struck, and the nimbus of British world supremacy disappeared." Germany admitted certain losses—one old battleship, the *Pommern;* three small cruisers, the *Wiesbaden*, *Elbing*, and *Frauenlob;* and five destroyers. A little later she confessed to the loss of a battle cruiser, *Lützow*, and the light cruiser *Rostock*, which at first she had kept secret "for political reasons."

It was a striking tribute to the prestige of the British navy that the German claim was received with incredulity in all Allied and in most neutral countries. But false news, once it has started, may be dangerous; and in some quarters, even among friends of the Allies, there was at first a disposition to accept the German version. The ordinary man is apt to judge of a battle, whether on land or sea, by the crude test of losses. The British Admiralty announced its losses at once with a candour which may have been undiplomatic, but which revealed a proud confidence in the invulnerability of the navy and the steadfastness of the British people. These losses were: one first-class battle cruiser, the *Queen Mary;* two lesser battle cruisers, the *Indefatigable* and *Invincible;* three armoured cruisers, the *Defence, Black Prince,* and *Warrior;* and eight destroyers, the *Tipperary, Ardent, Fortune, Shark, Sparrowhawk, Nestor, Nomad,* and *Turbulent.** More vital than the ships was the loss of thousands of gallant men, including some of the most distinguished of the younger admirals and captains.

Sir John Jellicoe at the time estimated the German losses as two battleships of the largest class, one of the *Deutschland* class, one battle cruiser, five light cruisers, six destroyers, and one submarine. He overstated the immediate, and understated the ultimate damage. The German account was formally accurate, but her real loss was infinitely greater. The *Seydlitz* and the *Derfflinger* limped home almost total wrecks; the battleship *Ostfriesland* struck a mine; the *Moltke* and the *Von der Tann* took weeks to repair; almost every vessel had been hit, some of them grievously. Scheer has declared that, apart from the two battle cruisers, the fleet was ready to take to sea by the middle of August; but the truth is that it was never again a fighting fleet. Jutland, which had at

* The class and displacement of the lost ships were as follows :—

			Tons.
1.	*Queen Mary*	Battle cruiser	27,000
2.	*Indefatigable*	„ „	18,750
3.	*Invincible*	„ „	17,250
4.	*Defence*	Armoured cruiser	14,600
5.	*Black Prince*	„ „	13,550
6.	*Warrior*	„ „	13,550
7.	*Tipperary*	Destroyer	1,430
8.	*Ardent*	„	935
9.	*Fortune*	„	935
10.	*Shark*	„	935
11.	*Sparrowhawk*	„	935
12.	*Nestor*	„	1,000
13.	*Nomad*	„	1,000
14.	*Turbulent*	„	1,430
		Total	113,300

first the colour of victory, was an irremediable disaster. After the war was over, Captain Persius wrote in the *Berliner Tageblatt*: "The losses sustained by us were immense, in spite of the fact that luck was on our side, and on June 1, 1916, it was clear to every one of intelligence that the fight would be, and must be, the only one to take place." The fact was recognized by reasonable minds everywhere, and it was only the ignorant who imagined that the loss of a few ships could weaken British naval prestige. There was much to praise in the German conduct of the action. The German battle-cruiser gunnery was admirable; Scheer's retreat when heavily outnumbered was skilfully conducted, and his escape in the night, even when we admit his special advantages, was a brilliant performance. But the one test of success is the fulfilment of a strategic intention, and Germany's most signally failed. From the moment of Scheer's return to port the British fleet held the sea. The blockade which Germany thought to break was drawn tighter than ever. Her secondary aim had been so to weaken the British fleet that it should be more nearly on an equality with her own. Again she failed, and the margin of British superiority was in no way impaired. Lastly, she hoped to isolate and destroy a British division. That, too, failed. The British Battle Cruiser Fleet remained a living and effective force, while the German Battle Cruiser Fleet was only a shadow. The result of the battle of 31st May was that Britain was more than ever confirmed in her mastery of the waters.

Nevertheless the fact that the only occasion on which the main fleets met did not result in the annihilation of the enemy was a disappointment and a surprise to the British people, and criticism has been busy ever since with the British leadership. It has been asked why the Admiralty at 5.12 p.m. on 31st May ordered the Harwich force to sea, and then cancelled the order for ten hours—and this when Jellicoe had long before asked that all available ships and torpedo craft should be ordered to the scene of the Fleet's action as soon as it was known to be imminent. Beatty's dash and resolution have been universally commended, but he has been criticized for allowing Evan-Thomas's squadron to lag so far behind that it scarcely joined in the first stages of the battle-cruiser action, and for the lack of precision in his messages to Jellicoe before their junction. But it is the conduct of the Commander-in-Chief which has principally been called in question. He has been accused of a lack of ardour in engaging the enemy, as shown in his deploying to port instead of to starboard; in his turning away between 7.15 and

7.30 p.m. on 31st May to avoid torpedo attacks; and in his refusal of a night battle. On the first and third of these points it would appear that the bulk of expert naval opinion is on his side; on the second the arguments are more evenly balanced, and the matter will long continue in dispute. Even had no turn away been ordered, it is doubtful whether the range could have been kept closed, owing to the bad light and Scheer's persistent turning to starboard. But from the controversy there emerges a larger issue, on which naval historians must eternally take sides. Was Jutland fought in the true Trafalgar tradition? Had the British Commander-in-Chief the single-hearted resolve to destroy the enemy at all costs, content to lose half or more than half his fleet provided no enemy ship survived? It is idle to deny that the destruction of the High Sea Fleet would have been of incalculable value to the Allies, for it would have taken the heart out of the German people; would have crippled, even if it did not prevent, the submarine campaign which in the next twelve months was to sink 25 out of every 100 merchantmen that left our shores; and would have opened up sea communication with Russia and thereby prevented the calamity of the following year. Was such a final victory possible at Jutland had Jellicoe handled the Battle Fleet as Beatty handled his battle cruisers?

The answer must remain a speculation. It is probable, indeed, that no risks accepted by the Commander-in-Chief would have altered a result due primarily to weather conditions and the late hour when the battle was joined. But the fact remains that Jellicoe's policy was that of the limited offensive. He was convinced that his duty was not to press the enemy beyond a point which might involve the destruction of his own weapon. The situation, as he saw it, had changed since the days of Trafalgar. Then only a relatively small part of the British fleet was engaged; now the Grand Fleet included the great majority of the vessels upon which Britain and her Allies had to rely for safety. There was ever present to his mind, in his own words, "the necessity for not leaving anything to chance in a Fleet action, because our Fleet was the one and only factor that was vital to the existence of the Empire, as indeed of the Allied cause. We had no reserve outside the Battle Fleet which could in any way take its place should disaster befall it, or even should its margin of superiority over the enemy be eliminated." Moreover, the British navy had already achieved its main purpose; was any further gain worth the risk of losing that victory? It was a war of peoples, and even the most decisive

triumph at sea would not end the contest, while a defeat would strike from the Allied hands the weapon on which all others depended. Such considerations are of supreme importance; if it be argued that they belong to statesmanship rather than to naval tactics, it may be replied that the commander of the British Grand Fleet should be statesman as well as seaman. A good sailor, of proved courage and resolution, chose to decide in conformity with what he regarded as the essential interests of his land and against the tradition of the service and the natural bias of his spirit, and his countrymen may well accept and respect that decision.

VI.

Following close upon the greatest naval fight of all history came the news of a sea tragedy which cost Britain the life of her foremost soldier. It had been arranged that Lord Kitchener should undertake a mission to Russia to consult with the Russian commanders as to the coming Allied offensive, and to arrange certain details of policy concerning the supply of munitions. On the evening of Monday, 5th June, he and his party embarked in the cruiser *Hampshire*, which had returned three days before from the Battle of Jutland. About 8 p.m. that evening the ship sank in wild weather off the western coast of the Orkneys, having struck a mine in an unswept channel. Four boats left the vessel, but all were overturned. One or two survivors were washed ashore on the inhospitable coast; but of Kitchener and his colleagues no word was ever heard again.

The news of his death filled the whole Empire with profound sorrow, and the shock was felt no less by our Allies, who saw in him one of the chief protagonists of their cause. The British army went into mourning, and all classes of the community were affected with a grief which had not been paralleled since the death of Queen Victoria. Labour leader, trade-union delegate, and the patron of the conscientious objector were as heartfelt in their regret as his professional colleagues or the army which he had created. He died on the eve of a great Allied offensive, and did not live to see the consummation of his labours. But in a sense his work was finished, for more than any other man he had the credit of building up that vast British force which was destined to be the determining factor in the war.

At the hour of his death he was beyond doubt the most dominant personality in the Empire, and the greatest of Britain's public

servants. His popular prestige was immense, for he had about him that air of mystery and that taciturnity which the ordinary man loves to associate with a great soldier. His splendid presence, his iron face, his silence, his glittering record, raised him out of the ranks of mere notabilities to the select circle of those who even in their lifetime became heroes of romance. He was a lonely figure, with no talent for the facile acquaintanceships of the modern world; but few men have inspired a more ardent affection among those who were admitted to the privilege of their friendship. Popular repute is apt to be melodramatic and to simplify unduly. Lord Kitchener was by no means the man of granite and iron whom the public fancy envisaged. He was a stern taskmaster, inflexibly just, and unfailingly loyal, but he had a deep inner fount of kindliness. He did not cultivate the gift of expression; but now and then, as after the Vereeniging Peace Conference, he showed something like a genius for the fitting word. He had humour, too, of a kind which the world little realized—that sense of the comedy of situation which keeps a man's perspective true.

To his abilities it is likely that history will do ample justice. He had behind him great positive achievements—the conquest of the Sudan, the completion of the South African campaign, a singularly successful administrative career in Egypt, and, above all, the organization of Britain for her greatest war. But in his own day the popular judgment was as wide of the mark as to the exact quality of his genius as to the nature of his personality. The capture of Omdurman and the eulogies of a famous war correspondent had established him as the complete administrator, the master of detail, the business man *in excelsis*. But the true bent of his mind was not towards detail. He was by no means the perfect administrator, for he did not understand the art of delegating duties to others, tending always to draw every task into his own capable hands. He was fond of short cuts and summary methods, and there were occasions when the result was confusion. His true genius lay in his foresight and imagination. That is why he was so brilliant an Oriental administrator, for he could read the native mind. That is why, in August 1914, when most people expected a short campaign, he declared that the war would last for three years, and made his plans accordingly. There were men in the British army, and there were men in the Allied forces, who ranked above him as scientific soldiers, learned in the latest military art. There were men who could have handled better than he a force

in the field. There were those, too, who equally well could have organized the business side of an army. But there was no man living who saw the main issues so simply and clearly. He could divine the essentials, though he might err over details. He had the vision which is possible only to the rare few whose souls are of the spacious and simple cast and are undistracted by the tumult of petty absorptions. And with insight went balance. His mind soberly and accurately discerned realities. In the apt words of his biographer: "He saw all, not as in a picture with the illusions of perspective, but as in a plan where dimensions and distances figure as they are and not as they seem." In the art of war, said Napoleon, the making of pictures is fatal; a good soldier sees objects exactly as they are, as if through a field-glass.

The last months had not been the happiest of his life. Many of the day by day problems which he found himself called upon to face were so unfamiliar to him that he handled them clumsily. He did not understand, nor was he understood by, certain of his colleagues. For politics in the ordinary sense he had no aptitude; he did not comprehend their language, and he did not shine in that business of discussion by which all normal government must be conducted. On many matters he spoke with an uncertain voice, for he was not quick at comprehending mere matter of detail, and often his colleagues were driven to a justifiable irritation. After the smooth mastery of his earlier career he was sometimes puzzled and uneasy in the vortex in which he found himself. To his long-sighted eyes the foreground was always apt to be a little dim. But the vision remained, and if he could not foresee what the day was to bring forth, he was right about the year.

More notable than his intellect were those gifts of personality which dominated without effort those who came into contact with him. No man of his time enjoyed a completer public confidence, and he had won it without any of the arts of the demagogue. A daimonic force radiated from him and affected millions who had never seen him. Without being a politician, he had the greatest of the politician's gifts—the power of creating a tradition which, so to speak, multiplied his personality indefinitely, and made the humblest and remotest recognize in him their leader. In the dark days of August 1914 he was the one man to whom the nation turned, and without the magic of his name Britain's stupendous military effort could not have been made. His death was a fitting conclusion to the drama of his life, since the great soldier of England found peace beneath the waves to which England had anew estab-

lished her title.* For epitaph let us set down words written of a very different figure, but applicable to all careers of splendid but unfinished achievement.

"His work was done . . . all of his work for which the fates could spare him time. A little space was allowed him to show at least a heroic purpose, and attest a high design; then, with all things unfinished before him and behind, he fell asleep after many troubles and triumphs. Few can ever have gone wearier to the grave; none with less fear. . . . Forgetful now and set free for ever from all faults and foes, he passed through the doorway of no ignoble death out of reach of time, out of sight of love, out of hearing of hatred. . . . In the full strength of spirit and of body his destiny overtook him, and made an end of all his labours. He had seen and borne and achieved more than most men on record. He was a great man, good at many things, and now he had attained his rest." †

* One of the finest tributes to his memory appeared in a journal published in the French trenches. The following is a free translation :—

"Cypress nor yew shall weave for him their shade;
Cypress nor yew shall shield his quiet sleep;
Marble must crack, and graven names must fade—
He for his tomb hath won the changeless deep.
We mortal pilgrims bring our transient gift,
Fast-fading flowers, as garlands for his fame;
But 'tis the tempest and the thunderous drift
That to eternity shall sound his name."

† Swinburne on Byron.

CHAPTER LVI.

THE AUSTRIAN ATTACK IN THE TRENTINO.

October 21, 1915–*June* 15, 1916.

The Winter Fighting in Italy, 1915–1916—Plan of Austrian Staff—Topography of the Asiago Plateau—The Attack begins—Arrival of Italian Reserves—The Attack dies away—Boselli succeeds Salandra as Prime Minister.

(*Map*, p. 64.)

THE achievement of Italy during the first year of war was too little appreciated by the world at large, and even her Allies were in some doubt as to its precise character. Her difficulties from the start had been very great. She began with a frontier so drawn at every point as to give the advantage to the enemy. Her main thrust could only be eastwards across the Isonzo; but, alone of the Allies, she had her flank and her communications directly threatened should she pursue her natural line of offensive. Hence she was compelled to fight hard and continuously on two fronts—to press against the Isonzo barrier, and at the same time to win safety in Carnia, the Dolomites, and the Trentino. Napoleon in 1798 and Massena in 1805 did not dare to cross the Isonzo till Joubert in the one case and Ney in the other had forestalled the danger of an enemy flank attack from the hills. Italy's battle-front was, therefore, not less than five hundred miles from the Stelvio in the north to the sea at Monfalcone. Moreover, they were five hundred of the most difficult miles in Europe. Beyond the Isonzo lay that strange plateau of the Carso which had long been selected for the Austrian defence. There trenches and shelters were hewn out of the solid rock, since ordinary field entrenchments were impossible in a land where there was no soil. The enemy had to be ousted from his hold before any advance could be made, and the campaign became in the strictest sense an attack upon a fortress. North of the Carso was the town of Gorizia, a formidable entrenched camp defended by 200,000 troops, and, with its flanking positions, showing a width of over sixty miles. North and west of the Isonzo

was the long horseshoe of the mountain front. Every pass was, to begin with, in Austria's hands, and to win security the enemy had to be pressed back over the watershed. Moreover, on Italy's left flank the ominous salient of the Trentino ran down into the Lombard plain, and offered a choice of a hundred starting-points for an Austrian assault upon the Italian rear. In strategical anxieties and tactical difficulties the Italian battle-ground was one of the worst in the whole area of the campaigns.

These military drawbacks found a counterpart in the condition of Italian politics. The great majority of the nation was on the Allied side, but that majority was not prepared for a protracted struggle. A short campaign of victory had been the general anticipation. Again, war had only been declared against Austria-Hungary, and Germany was nominally not yet an enemy. The immense purchase which the latter had won by her control of Italian commerce and finance made a breach with her unacceptable to many classes. This partial avoidance of the main issue led to some fumbling in Italian policy, and to the intrigues which always attend indecision. Moreover, it prevented the army from being what it was elsewhere, the whole nation in arms. During the long and desperate winter struggle the troops, which held their own so gallantly among Alpine snows and the floods of the Isonzo, did not yet represent the true sum of Italy's fighting strength.

If we realize the Italian difficulties, we shall do justice to the magnitude of her achievement. Her intervention, as we have seen, was an invaluable contribution to the Allied strategical purpose. She had drawn against her some of the best troops of the Dual Monarchy. She had drawn them to a line where they were more or less segregated from the rest of the Austrian forces, for the Italian sector was not an extension of the main Eastern front. Hence the Austrian Staff were placed in the position that they could not, after the German manner, move rapidly reinforcements to different parts of their line. Owing to the divergent nationalities under their command, they were unable to treat their armies as a homogeneous whole which could be moved solely according to military considerations. The existence of the Italian front, therefore, hampered that mobility on which the Central Powers, holding the interior lines, chiefly relied.

During the winter there was a steady pressure along the whole frontier, even in regions where the weather seemed to compel inaction. October and November saw considerable activity against the positions protecting Gorizia. On 21st October, after an artillery

preparation of fifty hours, the third main assault since the declaration of war was made on the Isonzo front. The fighting was fierce along the rim of the Doberdo plateau and towards San Martino, and some trenches were captured on the Podgora height. At the same time, in the Trentino, troops descending from Monte Altissimo cut the Austrian communications by the direct road from Riva to Rovereto. The bombardment on the Isonzo continued for a fortnight, and much damage was done to Gorizia itself. Further trenches were gained on Podgora, and on 20th November the village of Oslavia, north-west of Gorizia, was carried, while on the Carso ground was won on the north slopes of Monte San Michele and south-west of San Martino. Till the end of the month the struggle went on ; but the enemy was now reinforced, and in the first days of December the battle died away. The Italians had won a narrow strip along the western edge of the Carso, and had improved their position at Podgora ; but they were still far from bursting through the formidable Austrian defences.

For the main achievement of the winter campaign we must look to the great hills. It is probable that history has never seen such mountain warfare as was now waged from the Stelvio round the skirts of the Trentino, among the limestone crags of Cadore and Carnia, and down the dark gorges of the upper Isonzo. During the summer and early autumn the main passes had been won by Italy. The great Austrian lateral railway through the Pusterthal was under the fire of the guns behind Cristallo. Far up into the glaciers, and on the icy ridges, were Italian observation posts directing the guns behind the cliffs, and the heavy guns themselves were often emplaced at heights usually reached only by the mountaineer. There were batteries at an elevation of 9,000 feet, of which each gun weighed eleven tons, the carriage five tons, and the platform thirty tons. Many of the engineering and transport feats almost surpass belief ; for not only did men and guns reach unheard-of eyries, but they were able to maintain themselves there during the winter storms. It was difficult enough in the summer, when the Alpini in their *scarpetti di gatta*, or string-soled shoes, climbed the smooth white precipices of Tofana and Cristallo ; but in winter, when ice coated the rocks, and among the high peaks of the western Trentino avalanches hung poised on every cliff, it became the sternest trial of human endurance. He who has mountaineered in the Alps in winter is aware that extraordinary climbs may be made, given fair weather conditions ; but he knows too that the day must be picked, and that Nature may not easily

be defied. But the work of Italy's mountain defenders went on by day and night, and stayed not for the wildest weather. Food and ammunition must be brought up to the high posts at whatever cost. Much was done by the *filorie*, or aerial cables, on which a load of half a ton could travel, in the same way as in Norway the hay crop is sent down from the high *saeter* meadows to the deep-cut valleys. But no mechanical device could seriously lessen the constant difficulties and dangers. It must be remembered, too, that in the mountains the Italian Alpini found no mean antagonists. Whoever knows the hardy people of Tyrol will not underrate their hillcraft and courage. There were desperate encounters in that icy wilderness of which the tale has not been told, and when the snow melted grim sights were to be seen. On Monte Nero one morning the Italian line saw suddenly a new army on the hillside standing in a strange attitude. They were 600 Austrian corpses, frozen stiff, which the summer sun had rescued from the shroud of snow.

In the middle of March 1916 the guns began to sound again on the Isonzo. Gorizia and the Doberdo plateau were bombarded, and for a week or two there were attacks and counter-attacks. But the spring floods made progress difficult, and the only result of the action was to inspire the Austrian Staff with a firm belief that Cadorna contemplated an offensive in this quarter as soon as summer had come. The chief activity of the early spring was in the hill country. The night of 17th April saw one of the great mining exploits of the campaign. West of the Falzarego Pass, which runs from Cortina to Bozen, stands a bold, round-topped spur, just inside the Austrian frontier, which commands all the western road. It is called the Col di Lana, and in November 1915 its summit was taken by Colonel Peppino Garibaldi. But the summit could not be held, and while the Italians controlled the greater part of the mountain, the Austrians kept their foothold on the northern slopes. It was resolved to blast the enemy from his stronghold, and in the middle of January mining operations were begun under the guidance of a son of the Duke of Sermoneta. The tunnel took three months to complete. Before the end the Austrians grew suspicious, and started counter-mining; but their direction was wrong. On the night of 17th April the Italian mine was exploded, and the remnants of the Austrian position were carried by infantry. The crater thus formed was 150 feet wide and 50 feet deep. About the same time a brilliant action was fought far to the west, where the Adamello group separates the

upper waters of the Oglio from the streams that feed Lake Garda. The Austrians held the crest, and the Italians were in position far down on the great Adamello glacier, and on the rock ridges that cut it. Colonel Giordano, commanding an Alpini detachment, resolved to push the enemy from the crest. On the night of 11th April 300 Alpini left the Rifugio Garibaldi on skis, and reached the glacier in a whirlwind of snow. The place is 10,000 feet above the sea, and in April its climate is arctic. After struggling on through the night, they attacked the Austrian position in the early morning, and drove them from the rocks of the glacier. This exploit was followed on 29th April by a bigger movement. In a clear starlit night 2,000 Alpini followed the same route, forced the Austrians from the main crest, and, after severe fighting, in which they were assisted by a battery of 6-inch guns which had been brought up to the very edge of the glacier, dominated the head of the Val di Genova, and so won a position on the flank of the Austrian lines in the Val Giudicaria. Giordano was promoted major-general, and fell a few weeks later in the Trentino battles.

The Austrian front was now divided into three main sections. From the sea to Tolmino lay the V. Army, under Boroevitch von Bojna. North from Tolmino to Carnia lay the X. Army, under von Rohr; and the 14th (Tirol) Corps defended the Pusterthal line to the north of Cadore. In the Trentino itself lay two Austrian armies—those of Dankl and von Kövess: the whole under the command of the Archduke Charles, the heir to the Austrian throne. Between them these forces probably aggregated a million men, with 600,000 combatants in line. Throughout the winter there had been a gradual strengthening of one section of the front—that part of the Trentino between the Val Lagarina and the Val Sugana. Large numbers of batteries had been brought to the Folgaria and Lavarone plateaux south-west of the city of Trent. The infantry strength was also increased during April by picked troops from the whole Austrian front. The Italian Staff were aware of the concentration, but they anticipated no more than a local counter-attack, such as they had seen in April on the Isonzo. In that view they erred, for the Archduke Charles was preparing one of the major offensives of the war.

In the previous December, when the war on the Russian and Balkan fronts had slackened for the time, the Austro-Hungarian Staff had proposed a break-out from the Trentino salient against the flank and rear of Cadorna's lines, in the hope of putting Italy out of the war. Falkenhayn refused his consent, on the ground

that he could not spare German divisions to replace the troops taken from the Galician front; that if Cadorna were driven back into the plains it would not mean the end of Italy's resistance; and that, even if it did, "England and Russia, the two pillars of the Entente, would not be deeply grieved to see a partner who did so little and asked so much out of the business altogether." The proposal was therefore dropped for the moment, but it was revived in the spring, and the Austro-Hungarian General Staff determined to carry out the plan with their own resources. The friction between the two Staffs was growing, and Austria was resolved to do something to salve her wounded pride, and to exploit the weakness of Italy's strategic position. In the Trentino she had accumulated a total of some 400,000 men, and out of that she had a striking force of fifteen picked divisions. The obvious objective for an enemy in the Trentino was the plain of Venetia, through which ran the two railway lines which were the main communications of the Isonzo front. The northern ran by Brescia, Verona, Vicenza, and Castelfranco to Udine; the southern, by Mantua and Padua to Monfalcone. If one was cut, the Isonzo army would be crippled and compelled to retreat; if both fell, it would be in deadly danger. As at Verdun, the army of attack was to be commanded by the heir-apparent, for dynastic and military interests were interwoven in Teutonic strategy.

At the beginning of May the Italian position in the southern Trentino ran from a point just south of Rovereto in the Val Lagarina eastward up the Val Terragnolo, north of the mountain mass called Pasubio. Thence it stretched north-eastward just inside the Austrian frontier, facing the enemy lines on the Folgaria plateau. From the hill called Soglio d'Aspio it went due east and then north, just outside the old frontier line, to the Cima Manderiolo, from which point it ran north across the valley of the Brenta to Monte Collo, north-west of Borgo. Thence it passed north-east to the Val Calamento. The front had elements of dangerous weakness. On the extreme left the position at the north end of the Zugna ridge—the peak called Zugna Torta—was a salient exposed to the enemy's fire from three sides. The left centre and centre were also precarious, being commanded by the admirable Austrian gun positions on the Folgaria and Lavarone plateaux. The whole front was really a string of advanced posts which any resolute attack must speedily push in. The true Italian front was the second line, which ran from the Zugna ridge to the Pasubio *massif*, along the hills north of the Val Posina to the upper Astico, across the

north and higher part of the Sette Communi plateau, reaching the Val Sugana east of Borgo, at the glen of the little river Maso. Here, again, the left centre was badly situated, for behind it there were long bare slopes falling to the Posina and Astico valleys.

Obviously the main peril was on the flanks, for in the Val Lagarina and the Val Sugana there were roads and railways to support an enemy advance. In these valleys the defensive positions were good ; but there was always the danger that they might be turned by a thrust of the enemy's centre through the intervening mountains. There were three roads along which troops and guns could move. One—the best—ran from the Val Lagarina up the Vallarsa to Chiese, and thence by a good pass to the town of Schio just above the plain. Another ran from the Folgaria plateau down the glen of the Astico to the little town of Arsiero. A third ran from the Lavarone plateau down the Val d'Assa to the town of Asiago. Schio, Arsiero, and Asiago were all connected by light railways with the trunk line running through Vicenza, and Asiago was only eight miles from Valstagna in the valley of the lower Brenta. To get the Schio road the Austrians must carry Pasubio, which commanded it. To win Arsiero was easier, but in order to debouch from it they must get the ridge just south of it, the last line of the mountain defence. In the same way, while Asiago offered an easy prey, to make use of the gain they must clear the Sette Communi plateau to the south of it—so called from its seven villages, which long ago were a German settlement. In any great assault these three points—Pasubio, the ridge south of the Val Posina, and the Sette Communi upland—would form the last rallying ground of the defence. If they fell, the road to the plains was open.

In December Falkenhayn had told Conrad von Hoetzendorff that in the Trentino he could not secure a strategic or tactical surprise, since the deployment would be limited to a single railway. In this view the German Chief of Staff was wrong, for Cadorna was caught napping. The Italian Commander-in-Chief had staked everything on a short war and a dash for Trieste, and when this failed he seemed unwilling to evolve an alternative plan. A competent soldier of the old school, he was somewhat lacking in mental elasticity, and new facts dawned but slowly on his mind ; a native obstinacy made him tenacious of his own opinion and impatient of advice, and commanders who differed from him were apt to be summarily removed. He refused to admit the menace from the Trentino, and treated the First Army which held that front so casually

that it became known as "the convalescent corps." Its commander, Roberto Brusati, had warned him from February onward of the impending danger; but Cadorna was deaf, and Brusati suffered the fate of faithful counsellors, and was dismissed from his command.* Nevertheless the High Command was not wholly at ease, and the new commander, Pecori-Giraldi, was allowed to strengthen the flanks of the First Army in the Val Lagarina and Val Sugana, which were obviously the vital points. But the repentance came too late, and before the work could be completed the Archduke Charles had launched his attack.

The great bombardment began on 14th May. Over 2,000 guns, of which at least 800 were heavies, opened on a front of thirty miles. The Italian front line was blasted away, and from the 15-inch naval guns and the howitzers in the Folgaria and Lavarone positions shells were thrown into Asiago itself. The Italian advanced lines fell back at once in the centre, but resisted fiercely on the flanks at Zugna and west of Borgo. On the 15th and 16th there was a severe struggle on the Zugna ridge, and on the 17th the Italian left retired from Zugna Torta towards the Coni Zugna crest farther south. Next day all the section from Monte Maggio to Soglio d'Aspio was abandoned; and on the following day, the 19th, the centre in the upper glen of the Astico was driven from the position Monte Toraro–Monte Campomolon–Spitz Tonezza. Things went better on the right, but the defeat of the centre meant that the Arsiero plateau must fall. That day the Italian line ran from Coni Zugna over the Pasubio *massif*, and then—waveringly—north of the Val Posina and across the Sette Communi tableland to the Val Sugana.

On 20th May Cadorna decided to withdraw his centre to a position well in the rear. The north side of the Val Posina was no place to hold, so the Italians fell back to the southern ridge, and to a line in the Sette Communi east of the Val d'Assa. This withdrawal was completed by the 24th in good order; but the Austrian advance did not allow the defence time to prepare its new ground. Many prisoners had been lost in the past days, and the casualties were heavy, though the enemy had also suffered severely whenever he came out from the shelter of his guns. By the 25th the Austrians were violently attacking Coni Zugna and Pasubio, and had made of the latter a salient, since they had pushed up the Rovereto–Schio road between it and Coni Zugna

* For three years he carried the whole blame of the mischance, till his reputation was completely cleared by the findings of a Commission of Inquiry.

as far as the hamlet of Chiese under the Buole Pass. If the advance continued, Pasubio must fall; and if Pasubio fell, the whole Italian centre south of the Val Posina was turned, and the way was open to the Venetian plains.

Meantime Cadorna had summoned his reserves, a new army, to assemble in and around Vicenza. This was the Fifth Army, which had been already concentrated between the Tagliamento and the Isonzo for the offensive against Gorizia. In ten days it began to appear on the skirts of the hills—a total of little less than half a million men. But it could not arrive in force before 2nd June—and to be ready so soon was a real feat of organization and transport—and it was necessary for Pecori-Giraldi to hold the fort for the critical last week of May. Some local reserves were brought to aid him, including one division which in a single night was moved by motor from Carnia to Pasubio.

By the 25th, while Pasubio and the Posina position were threatened, the Italian right in the Val Sugana had managed to retire in good order east of Borgo to its prepared line on the east bank of the Maso torrent. But the right centre in the Sette Communi was in hard case. On the 25th and 26th it was driven off all the heights east of the Val d'Assa. On the 27th the Austrians were south of the Galmarara, a tributary of the Assa on the left bank. On the 28th they had occupied the mountain called Moschicce, just north of Asiago.

While things were going thus ill on the right centre, the Italian left was fighting the action which marked the critical point in the battle. For days a desperate struggle raged for Coni Zugna and Pasubio, and especially for the pass of Buole, which would give the enemy access to the lower Adige. There, in spite of the Austrian mastery in guns, the Italians managed to remain in their makeshift trenches till they could get to grips with the bayonet. Again and again the waves of attack rolled forward, broke, and ebbed. On 30th May came the climax. The Austrian infantry in masses assaulted the pass of Buole; but the defence did not yield one yard. On that day 7,000 Austrians fell, and in the week's fighting some 40 per cent. of their effectives perished. By their fortitude at this supreme moment the Italians had blunted the point of the whole Austrian spear-thrust.

But the battle was still far from its end. The enemy now endeavoured to take Pasubio, attacking on three sides—from the ridge of Col Santo, from Chiese, and from the Val Terragnolo by the Borcole Pass. His superiority in men was great, and in guns

greater. But the resolute defence did not break. For three weeks in the snow of the ridges it battled heroically against odds, till the assault slackened, weakened, and then died away. Meantime the Italian centre was scarcely less highly tried. The battle-ground lay in two sections—the left along the ridge which runs from Pasubio south of the Posina, the right across the Sette Communi tableland. On 25th May the Austrians took Bettale, on the Posina, and the height of Cimone, which dominated Arsiero. On the 28th they were across the Posina, and fighting for the southern ridge, the last line of defence before the plains. On 30th May they won the peak of Pria Fora, one of the points on the ridge, and to the east were on the heights just north of Arsiero. By that day the Italians had evacuated both Arsiero and Asiago, and at the latter place the enemy was east of the Val Campomolon, and within four miles of the Val Sugana, well to the rear of the Italian front in that valley. In the centre he was all but looking down on Schio. On 1st June an Austrian army order informed the troops that only one mountain remained between them and the Venetian plain. Three days later the Italians were driven east of the Val Canaglia, to the south-east of Arsiero. The enemy was only eighteen miles from Vicenza and the trunk line.

But he had exhausted his strength. He had been held on the wings, and this nullified the success of his centre. Already, on 27th May, he had asked for a division from Prince Leopold's Army Group, and Falkenhayn realized that the situation had grown critical. On 3rd June Cadorna announced that the Austrian offensive had been checked. He had got his new army; moreover, the troops already in line had taken the measure of the enemy. The Italian position now ran from Zugna Torta to Pasubio, then well south of the Posina to the Astico, south-east of Arsiero, east of the Val Canaglia, along the southern rim of the Asiago plateau to east of the Val Campomolon, and then north along the edge of the tableland that drops to the Val Sugana. While the new army was preparing its attack, a ceaseless struggle went on on the Posina heights and in the Sette Communi. In the first sector the enemy sought to reach Schio and the plains, and in the second to turn the Italian right in the Val Sugana. If this fighting represented the great effort of the Austrian offensive, it was not less the supreme effort of the heavily tried defence. On the night of 4th June Ciove, the last Italian position south of the Posina, was violently assailed; and again on 12th June, when the whole ridge was blasted by the great guns. On the 13th the

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THE AUSTRIAN ATTACK IN THE TRENTINO.

(*Facing p. 64.*)

MAP OF THE ROUTE OF THE EXPEDITION

attack was renewed without success; but the Italian brigade which held the place lost 70 per cent. of its strength. In the Sette Communi the main points of attack were Monte Cengio, the Val Canaglia, and the Val Frenzele, where the enemy was within four miles of Valstagna in the Val Sugana. On 15th June, and for the two days following, the troops on Monte Pau, the southern edge of the Sette Communi, repulsed what proved to be the last of the great Austrian assaults. The action declined into an artillery duel, and a week later Cadorna had begun to move forward in his counter-stroke.

The Austrian attack in the Trentino had deferred—but not for long—Italy's main offensive plan; it had been costly to the defence, and had shown some of the bloodiest combats of the war. Shelling with great guns among those peaks was a desperate business; for whereas elsewhere there was deep soil to limit the effects of the percussion, there among rock walls the result was as shattering as on the deck of a steel battleship. The test proved and tempered the resolution of the Italian soldier. It awoke certain sections of the people, who were still apathetic, to the realities of war, and—as is usual in a democracy when things go wrong—it led to the formation of a new Ministry. Salandra fell from power, and a Cabinet was formed under Signor Boselli, with Sonnino still in charge of Foreign Affairs. Through the whole Italian army went a wave of honest pride, which is the due of those who have suffered much and held their ground. But the true moral—the inefficiency of the military hierarchy at the top—was missed, and it was the Prime Minister, who dared to criticize it, that suffered. For sixteen months longer the valour of the troops was to be misused in blind and ill-considered attacks, till a crushing disaster dispelled the legend of infallibility which had too long shrouded the High Command.

The vital consequences of Austria's attack were to be found in the field of general strategy. She had crowded her men and guns into a deep salient, served by few railways, and some hundreds of miles from her main battle-ground. In grips there with a determined enemy, she could not easily or quickly break off the battle should danger threaten elsewhere. And danger, deadly and unlooked for, speedily threatened. For on Sunday, 4th June, the day after Cadorna proclaimed the check of the invasion, Brussilov had launched his thunderbolt on the Galician front.

CHAPTER LVII.

BRUSSILOV IN GALICIA.

June 3–August 11, 1916.

Change in Russia's Plan—Condition of Austrian Armies—Brussilov's five Battle-grounds—Fall of Lutsk and Dubno—The Affair at Baranovitchi—Fall of Czernovitz and Kimpolung—Capture of Brody—Results of the Ten Weeks' Battle—Changes in Austrian Dispositions.

(*Map*, p. 84.)

SINCE the failure of the advance in the Lake Narotch region in April quiet had reigned on the long front between the Gulf of Riga and the Rumanian border. May brought the Austrian irruption into Italy, but Alexeiev made no sign of movement. At a time when Cadorna was sorely tried, and it looked as if the Archduke Charles would reach the Venetian plains, the Power which had not yet failed an ally at need remained inactive. Russia had her own plan, and it took time to mature. She was making ready for the great combined Allied offensive which was due as soon as Germany should have spent her strength at Verdun and the new British troops and guns were ready for action. It had taken her a long winter to make her preparations, to drill her reserves, to improve her communications, and to collect munitions. Ivanov's Christmas attack on Czernovitz and Evert's spring offensive towards Vilna had been only local assaults with a local purpose ; the coming advance was conceived on a far greater scale, and with a far wider strategic purpose. At a given signal, in conjunction with all her allies, she would sweep forward, and that device of Germany's which had hitherto checked her—the power of moving troops at will by good internal lines—would be defeated. For if the Teutonic League were attacked everywhere at once there would be no troops to move.

But no great plan can be followed to the letter, and the man who sticks too rigidly to a programme is not a soldier but a pedant. The Russian offensive, as originally planned, was to be undertaken

by Evert's western group west of Molodetchno with the Fourth, the Tenth, and the new Guard Army. But during May it was becoming clear that Italy might be so hard pressed that she would have to use in defence all the resources which she had allotted to her share in the joint offensive. The date for the main movement was not put forward. But it was resolved to use the new might of Russia in a preliminary attack against the Austrian section of the Eastern front to ease the pressure on Italy. At the same time all was put in readiness to follow up any successes that might be gained, and to merge, should it seem desirable, the preliminary attack in the main operation.

On the first day of June the Austro-German armies south of Pinsk lay on the following lines. From the small salient east of that city their front ran nearly due south, following at first the left bank of the Styr, but crossing to the right bank above Rafalovka. East of Chartorysk it left that river, and ran south till it cut the Lemberg–Rovno railway just east of Dubno. It crossed the Galician frontier north of Tarnopol, which town was in Russian hands, and followed the Strypa a few miles to the east of the stream. It reached the Dniester west of Usciezko, where the Russians held the river crossing, and then turned east along the northern shore, curving round to the Rumanian frontier on the Pruth a dozen miles from Czernovitz. This sector was held by four armies. Astride the Pripet lay Linsingen, and south to the Styr the Archduke Joseph's Austrian IV. Army. From just south of Lutsk to west of Tarnopol lay Boehm-Ermolli's Austrian II. Army. Thence Bothmer's Southern Army carried the front to the Dniester; while south of it lay the VII. Austrian Army, under Pflanzer-Baltin, down to the Rumanian frontier. It was the old line which, with new dints at Usciezko and east of Czernovitz, they had held throughout the winter. Opposite this force lay the Russian South-Western Army Group, which till April was in the hands of Ivanov. Recalled to staff duties at the Imperial Headquarters, he was succeeded by Brussilov, who had commanded the Eighth Army through the storm and shine of the Carpathian struggle of 1914–15. Brussilov was one of the most war-worn of all the Russian commanders, for he had been continually in action since the first day of the campaign. But he was born, if ever man was, with a "faculty for storm and turbulence," and twenty-two months of conflict had left no mark on his eager spirit. He was recognized by all as an incomparable leader of troops, but doubts had been expressed as to whether he had the capacity for controlling large and complex

operations; whether his talents were not more suited for a cavalry dash or a stone-wall retreat than for the methodical stages of scientific warfare. He had four armies in his charge: on his right his old Eighth Army—now under General Kaledin, who, like his forerunner, was a cavalryman; next, the Eleventh, under Sakharov—once Kuropatkin's Chief of Staff in Manchuria; then the Seventh, under Tcherbachev; and lastly the Ninth, under Lechitski, extending to the Rumanian border.

Certain misconceptions were prevalent at this time in the West with regard to the nature of the Austro-German front in Volhynia, Galicia, and the Bukovina. It was assumed to be a fluid and make-shift affair in contrast with the serried fortifications of the West. This much was true, that in large tracts where the line extended through the woods and swamps of Poliesia there was no continuous front, any more than there was a continuous front in the marshes of the Somme. That was inevitable from the nature of the country. Nor was there anything like that consistent and intricate strength which two years of labour had produced in France and Flanders, since at the most this Eastern line had been established for eight months. But it would be an error to regard the Austrian sector as mere improvised field shelters. The trench lines were numerous and good, the dug-outs deep and commodious, the wire entanglements on a liberal scale. There were well-constructed, if not always well-sited, reserve positions. The communications were admirable—far better than anything behind the Russian front. New roads and a great number of light railways connected the firing trenches with the trunk lines of Galicia. In mechanical industry the Austrians showed themselves apt pupils of their German masters. Nothing was left undone to ensure the comfort of the officers. Commodious subterranean dwellings and elegant cabins embowered in the woods amazed the oncoming Russians with evidences of a luxury which was unknown in their hardy lives. Like the Germans on the Somme, the Austrians behaved as if their front had grown stable and could not be broken, and they were resolved to make it a pleasant habitation. The fault of Austria did not lie in negligent fatigue work, but in an underestimate of the enemy before her. She did not believe that Russia could move yet awhile, and she had depleted her long front of both men and guns. The strongest fortifications on earth cannot be held against a resolute foe unless there is also a superior artillery behind them, and infantry adequate in quality and numbers to man them. There were no strategic reserves left to meet

an attack, and too many batteries had gone west to the Trentino. Above all, the Austrian infantrymen had not the fighting value of the Russian. There were good troops on the Galician front, but the average was not equal to that of their opponents. There was not the same national impetus behind them, and there was a strange lack of touch between the higher and the regimental commands, and between officers and men. Armies bundled about like pawns at the bidding of an alien staff could not have the dash or the tenacity of men who fought for a cause they understood, under the command of tried and trusted leaders.

We must conceive of Brussilov's plan as in the first instance strictly a reconnaissance—a reconnaissance made on an immense scale and with desperate resolution, but still a reconnaissance rather than a blow at a selected objective. His strategy was not yet determined. Behind the enemy's front lay vital points like Kovel and Lemberg and Stanislau ; but the way to each was long, and might be hopeless. His business was to test the strength of the enemy lines on a front of nearly 300 miles between the Pripet and Rumania. When he knew its strength he would know his own purpose. He was like a man beating at a wall to discover which parts are solid stone and which are lath and plaster. But each blow was to be delivered with all his might, for this was a test of life and death.

May had been a month of heavy rains, and the wet lowlands south of the Pripet and around the lower Styr made a bad campaigning ground. It was better southward among the sandy fields and the oak woods of Volhynia, and on the Galician plateau summer conditions reigned. On Sunday, 4th June, a steady, methodical bombardment opened along the whole of Brussilov's front. It appeared to be directed chiefly on the wire entanglements and not on the trenches, and at first the hinterland was scarcely touched. The " preparation " was intense and incessant, but it bore no relation to the overwhelming destruction which had preluded Neuve Chapelle and the Donajetz, Loos, and Verdun. It seemed rather like the local bombardments which preceded the trench raids of the winter—only it fell everywhere ; and when, late on the Saturday, the Austrian High Command realized this, they grew puzzled, and cast about for an explanation.

They were not left long in doubt. The work of the Russian guns was short—twelve hours only in some places, and nowhere more than twenty hours. The Austrian trenches had been little

damaged, but alleys had been ploughed in the wire before them. On the morning of Monday, 5th June, between the Pripet and the Pruth, punctually to the hour, the waves of Russian infantry crossed their parapets.

It will be convenient, in considering a series of actions of the first order in magnitude and complexity, to take the different sections of the battle-ground in sequence, and carry the narrative of the events in each to the close of the first stage of the forward movement. The sections were five in number—that from Kolki northwards to the Pripet, where Kaledin's right was engaged with Linsingen ; that between Kolki and Dubno, the Volhynian Triangle, where Kaledin's left and Sakharov's right faced the Austrian IV. Army ; that between Dubno and Zalostse, where Sakharov's left was in conflict with Boehm-Ermolli ; that between Zalostse and the Dniester, where, in front of Tarnopol, Tcherbachev engaged Bothmer ; and the corridor between the Dniester and the Pruth, where Lechitski faced Pflanzer-Baltin. It was in the second and fifth of these sections that the first fortnight of June showed the chief results.

North of Kolki, where the brimming swamps still made progress difficult, little impression was made on Linsingen's front. It was different in the area of the Volhynian Triangle. Between Lutsk and Rovno lies a district some thirty miles long from north to south, which is defined on these sides by the river Ikva, a confluent of the Styr, and the river Putilovka, a tributary of the Goryn. Here the armies of Kaledin and Sakharov made their great effort. About the centre lies the village of Olyka, in the midst of a rolling, treeless country. For the attack the Russians had the good Rovno–Lutsk and Rovno–Brody railways, besides the main Rovno–Lutsk highroad. From Olyka they pressed due west, and farther south they advanced down the Ikva valley along the Dubno–Lutsk road. By noon of the first day the Austrian front was completely gone. The bayonets of the Russians swept over the parapets, while the barrage cut off all communication with the rear. The result was that the elaborate Austrian trenches and deep dug-outs proved the veriest trap. Troops were packed and huddled in them without any means of escape, and were captured in thousands by the triumphant Russian infantry. The Cossacks went through and rounded up those who had escaped the barrage. That day in Lutsk the birthday of the Archduke Joseph was being celebrated, when news came that the front had been driven in, and that the enemy was sweeping towards the

Styr. Confidence was placed for a moment in the great strength of the Lutsk defences; but there comes a stage in demoralization when no fortifications seem adequate. On Tuesday, 6th June, Kaledin was at its gates, and in the afternoon the Austrian army commander sought safety in flight. At twenty-five minutes past eight in the evening the Russian vanguard entered the town, and found an amazing booty. Batteries of heavy guns and vast stores of shells and material fell to the conqueror, and since there had been no time to evacuate the hospitals, many thousands of Austrian wounded were added to the total of prisoners.

Lutsk was taken and the Styr and Ikva crossed, but it was necessary to broaden the wedge if an acute salient was not to be the result of the victory. Accordingly the next few days were spent in advancing north and south of Lutsk, and especially in winning the points where the Rovno–Lutsk and the Rovno–Brody railways crossed respectively the Styr and the Ikva. On 8th June these two points, Rojitche and Dubno, were the scene of heavy fighting. Next day both fell, thus giving Russia the third and last of the Volhynian fortresses. The Ikva was also crossed at Mlynov, and the advance pushed west and south-west till by the 13th Kozin, a village half-way between Dubno and Brody, had been taken, as well as Demidovka to the north-west, and all the forest land between. West of Lutsk the Cossacks were ranging the country far and wide, and by the 13th had reached Zaturtsy, half-way to Vladimir Volynsk, while farther north they were on the upper streams of the Stokhod. Kaledin and Sakharov had cut a semicircle out of the enemy front, of which the radius was nearly forty miles. Farther north Kaledin's right wing was now making some progress. Kolki itself fell on 13th June, and since the line of the upper Styr was gone, and the enemy driven back behind the Stokhod, Svidniki, on the latter stream, was taken after a violent battle, and in the crossing of the river a complete German battalion was captured by Siberian troops. South of the main battle-ground the Russian front was pushed down to the Galician border near Radzivilov and Alexinietz.

By 16th June, after twelve days of fighting, Kaledin, with the assistance of Sakharov's right wing, had advanced some fifty miles from his original line. He had captured Lutsk and Dubno, he had reached the Galician frontier, and was at one point within twenty-five miles of Kovel. He had taken prisoner over 1,300 officers and 70,000 men, and had captured fifty-three guns and colossal quantities of every type of war material. After the long months

of trench contests this sudden and dazzling sweep restored to the world its old notions of war.

It was time to call a halt and await the counter-stroke. When the torrent first fell on the Austrian front, Hindenburg sent from the north such reserves as he was able to spare. Certain Landwehr and Landsturm regiments came from Prince Leopold's army in the marshes, and several German divisions from the Dvina front. Ludendorff was dispatched post-haste to straighten out the tangle, and the Volhynian part of Boehm-Ermolli's command was put under Linsingen. But after 16th June more formidable reinforcements began to appear. Austrian troops were coming from Tyrol and the Balkans, and German divisions were hurried from France. How great was the urgency may be judged from the fact that a German corps moved from Verdun to Kovel in six days. These reserves were not fresh troops, and some of them had been severely ground in the Verdun mill, but they were the best that the emergency could produce. Kovel was the danger-point, for if Kovel fell the main lateral communications would be cut between Lemberg and Brest Litovsk, between the Armies of the Centre and the Armies of the South. For the defence of Kovel, accordingly, every available man was brought into line, the new German army of manœuvre under Linsingen taking to itself the area of the Styr and Stokhod, and the Austrians the sections from Vladimir Volynsk to the Bug.

Linsingen's counter-attack opened on 16th June, and was pressed with gradually ebbing vigour till the end of the month. He did not fight with all the reinforcements he had expected, for on 13th June Evert, on the Russian centre, had attacked north of Baranovitchi; and though he failed to break the German front, his thrust detained there divisions which would otherwise have been marching south.

We may here conveniently summarize the various actions on the northern and central sections of the Russian front which were fought during the great Southern offensive. Baranovitchi stood on the plateau close to the watershed between the river Servech, which joined the Niemen, and the Shara, which flowed to the Pripet. It was an important railway junction, where the Vilna-Rovno line met the railway from Smolensk to Brest Litovsk. The possession of the place by the Germans should have cut the lateral communication of the Russian armies, but a switch line had been constructed behind their front to link up the broken part. Baranovitchi, therefore, did not mean a great deal to Russia, but it

represented an immense amount to Germany, for it was a nodal point of the whole railway system between Vilna and Brest Litovsk. Hence any attack on the place was sure to be strongly resisted, and to draw in all adjacent reserves. Moreover, in the event of success, any gain in this region would pave the way for a converging attack by Evert and Brussilov on Brest Litovsk. In the beginning of June the Russian Fourth Army, under General Ragoza, was facing the army group under Woyrsch. Ragoza's attack was most elaborately prepared by sapping up to within close distance of the enemy. On the morning of 13th June the bombardment opened, and at four in the afternoon the Russian infantry attacked on the front along the upper Shara. Presently the battle line extended farther south towards the Oginski Canal, and north to the upper streams of the Servech. In the early days of July, when Lesch and Kaledin were preparing their second offensive, Ragoza renewed his efforts. On 2nd July the German trenches received a baptism of fire which had scarcely been paralleled in the campaign. To the Russians it was their revenge for the Donajetz. "All the bitterness," wrote one officer, "the sufferings, with which was strewn the long path of our retreat, were poured out in this fire." But Woyrsch's men resisted stubbornly; by 4th July Ragoza had penetrated the enemy's lines to a depth of two miles on a front of twelve, but by 9th July it was clear that the advance had reached its limit. On 14th July Woyrsch attempted a counter-stroke without success, and thereafter the battle died away. It had fulfilled its purpose, for at a critical moment in Brussilov's movement it had disorganized the enemy's plan and divided his forces of resistance. The result was assisted by the attack of Radko Dmitrieff on 16th July with the Twelfth Army from the Riga bridgehead—a holding battle which lasted till the end of the month.

Linsingen's aim east of Kovel was to check the enemy and wrest from him the initiative—to achieve a counter-stroke which would give a breathing space to the rest of the shattered front. In this object he partially succeeded, for during the fortnight Kaledin's triumphant course was stayed. The counter-stroke was delivered by three enemy groups—in the south of the salient, on the line Lokatchy–Gorokhov; in the centre, between the Vladimir Volynsk–Lutsk road and Svidniki on the Stokhod; and from the north, against the Rojitche–Kolki sector of the Styr line.

The immediate result was that Kaledin had to retire from Svidniki and the western bank of the Stokhod. The action was

now joined on the west bank of the Styr, on a line dipping south-west to Kisielin, at the Stokhod source. At Gadomitchi, on the Styr, just west of Kolki, the fighting was especially furious, and the place changed hands several times in the course of one day. At the other end of the line the village of Vorontchin, north-east of Kisielin, was the chief centre of the struggle. South of the Vladimir Volynsk road, below Lokatchy and Gorokhov, the Austrians made their main effort, attacking in massed formations and winning some successes. Kaledin withdrew his front on his left centre a matter of some five miles to the line Zaturtsy–Bludov–Lipa. On his right centre, apart from the retreat from Svidniki, he held more or less the ground he had gained. The counter-attack died down about 20th June, to revive with redoubled violence in the last days of the month. But the second effort was less successful than the first. It kept the Kovel road blocked for Kaledin, but it was not that crushing counter-stroke which Hindenburg had hoped would take the edge off the Russian temper and cripple the impetus of Brussilov's attack. Germany was aware that the offensive was only beginning in the East, and that presently the fires would blaze on the Western front. She strove to scotch the menace in one vital sector while yet there was time, but only succeeded in postponing it for a fortnight.

Going south from Lutsk, we reach the sector Dubno–Zalostse, where Sakharov faced Boehm-Ermolli. There, with a low watershed between them, run the Ikva and the Sereth, in a country of insignificant hills patched with oak woods and wide marshy valleys. Sakharov's right wing, as we have seen, had pushed far on the road to Brody along the railway from Dubno, and had almost reached the frontier station of Radzivilov. For the moment its *rôle* was secondary. It supported the army to the north of it, but did not press on towards Brody, its main objective, since Tcherbachev in the south had found his advance seriously checked.

South of the Tarnopol–Lemberg railway the ground rises from the low downs of Volhynia in the great lift of the Podolian tableland, where the rivers flow south to the Dniester in deep-cut wooded cañons. There the Austrian front followed for a little the course of the Sereth, and then struck westward to the glen of the Strypa, on the eastern bank of which it ran till it reached the Dniester. It was a countryside made by nature for defence against an enemy coming from the east. The approaches were open and unsheltered,

and the positions themselves offered endless chances for concealing guns and perfecting redoubts.

Tcherbachev made his attack at three main points. The first was between the Tarnopol–Lemberg line and Zalostse, the second at the lift of the plateau around Burkanov, and the third along the Buczacz–Stanislau railway. In the first he was firmly held by Bothmer, who had rightly argued that any attack would follow the Tarnopol railway. At Burkanov things went better, and the enemy were driven in many places across the Strypa. The left wing of the Russian Seventh Army at Buczacz had a success comparable with the great events in Volhynia. On 8th June Buczacz was carried, the Strypa was crossed, and the advance pushed well to the west of the stream. But it was clear that on no grounds of strategy could an army move too far forward in this section with Bothmer's centre unbroken to the north of it. In front of it lay the Dniester and the strong bridgehead of Halicz; on its left lay the rugged Dniester defile with an unconquered country on the other bank. An advance ran the risk of being driven southward and pinned against a dangerous river line. Tcherbachev accordingly was compelled to stay his hand and wait upon developments in the Bukovina.

The corridor between the Dniester and the Pruth, which is the main entrance from the east into the Bukovina, afforded no easy access to an invader, as Ivanov had found to his cost in his offensive of Christmas 1915. For it is a corridor blocked by a range of hills, which only in the north break down into the little plain between Dobronovstse and the Dniester—a plain, moreover, which is itself blocked from the Bessarabian side by subsidiary foothills. At Christmas Lechitski had attempted to force the hills by a frontal assault, and had failed. On the north the Dniester formed a strong barrier, and of the three main bridgeheads, the two most important, Zalestchiki and Ustsie Biskupie, were in Austrian hands. The third, Usciezko, was Russia's, but the surrounding country did not permit of its serving as a base for a crossing in force. The Bukovina seemed triply armoured against attacks from east and north.

Lechitski's plan was to concentrate on the dubious gap between Dobronovstse and Okna, for if this were once forced the line of the Dniester at Zalestchiki and the range of hills would both be turned. He had the advantage of surprise, for the result of the Christmas battle seems to have convinced Pflanzer-Baltin that his position was impregnable. The Russian general aimed at

attacking the Okna–Dobronovstse line simultaneously from the east through the corridor, and from the north across the Dniester, where the Russian position on the left bank commanded the lower southern shore. On 2nd June the bombardment began, and on the evening of 4th June—the same day which saw Kaledin sweeping upon Lutsk—the Russian infantry crossed the river towards Okna and the foothills towards Dobronovstse. It was now clear to Pflanzer-Baltin that a desperate crisis had come upon him. He had under his command many of the picked troops of Hungary, and they were flung wildly into the breach. But they were blasted out of their positions by the Russian guns, and forced back in grim hand-to-hand struggles by the terrible Russian bayonets. By 9th June the Dobronovstse line had gone, and Lechitski had taken 347 officers, including one general, 18,000 other ranks, and ten guns.

Pflanzer-Baltin fell back along the little branch lines which led to Czernovitz and Kolomea, with the enemy close at his heels. Zalestchiki was now turned, and the Russians on 12th June had the bridgehead, and had pushed west to Horodenka, a great road junction which lies some twenty miles north-west of Czernovitz. With the enemy pouring across the Dniester and through the corridor, Pflanzer-Baltin's position was hopeless. His force began to break up. Most of it retreated south across the Pruth, but detachments went west along the road to Kolomea. On 13th June Lechitski was in Sniatyn, and was descending on Czernovitz from the north, whence Austrian officials and German professors were fleeing like the household of Lot from the Cities of the Plain. The Austrians had evacuated Sadagora, on the Czernovitz–Zalestchiki road, and were now across the Pruth, attempting to hold the low ridge of hills on the southern bank. In nine days Lechitski had taken 757 officers, 37,832 other ranks, and forty-nine guns.

On 16th June the Russians crossed the Pruth, and that night the military evacuation of Czernovitz began. Next day, at four in the afternoon, the conquerors entered the city. Pflanzer-Baltin was now in full retreat through southern Bukovina towards the Carpathians, leaving behind him masterless detachments at Stanislau, Kolomea, and along the Dniester. He seems to have hoped to make a stand on the Sereth, the Bukovina river of that name which flows into the Danube. But Lechitski gave him no time to halt. The day after Czernovitz fell he was across the Sereth, and on the 21st was thirty miles south of the capital. Columns were meanwhile moving westward, and were presently in Kuty and Pistyn, on the outskirts of Kolomea. On 23rd June Kimpolung,

the most southerly town of the province, was taken, together with sixty officers and 2,000 men. The "country of the beech woods" was once again in Russian hands.

On this date, 23rd June, closed the first stage of what had been one of the most rapid and spectacular advances in the history of the war. In three weeks a whole province had been reconquered; Lutsk and Dubno had been retaken; the advance was within twenty-five miles of Kovel, and within ten of Brody; the prisoners captured numbered 4,031 officers and 194,041 of other ranks; 219 guns and 644 machine guns had been taken, besides vast quantities of all war material. Strategically, the first stages had been won in the attack upon the three vital places behind the enemy front —Kovel, Lemberg, and Stanislau. The Austrian line had been pierced and shattered over wide stretches, and the campaign in these areas translated from the rigidity of trench warfare to something like the freedom of manœuvre battles. For the first time since the beginning of the war the Russians were, as regards artillery and munitions, on terms of an approximate equality with their foe, and the decision lay with their incomparable foot and cavalry. In another matter they were on level terms—in Volhynia and at Buczacz they had railways to support their advance equal to those of their opponents. Brussilov had made brilliant use of his newly acquired advantages, and had conducted his vast operations with the skill of a master. Only the first step had been taken; the movement was still far from having won a strategic decision; but loss, vast and irreparable, had already been caused to the shrinking man-power of Austria.

June had been a month of signal successes, but these successes were incomplete. Brussilov had pushed out two great wedges in Volhynia and the Bukovina, but he could not rest on his laurels. A wedge is liable to the counter-stroke unless its flanks are guarded by natural obstacles, and this was not the case in Volhynia, where the Stokhod line had not yet been won, and in the south there was a perpetual menace from the direction of Brody and Lemberg. In the Bukovina the Carpathians gave security to Lechitski's left when the time came that he had gained the foothills; but Bothmer's army held the crossings of the middle Dniester, and till it was forced to retreat it prevented any advance from Buczacz towards Halicz. The position of Bothmer was, indeed, the crux of the whole matter. The Russians had found, during their great retreat in the summer of 1915, that in eastern Galicia they might

be hopelessly outflanked to south and north, and yet be able to retire at their leisure. The parallel river cañons running to the Dniester provided an ideal set of successive positions, and now Bothmer had the advantage of them. Brussilov's immediate duty, therefore, before moving towards his ultimate objective, was to straighten his front. He must carry the line of the Stokhod and rest his right flank on the marshes of the lower Styr and the Pripet. Similarly, he must take Brody, and advance his left wing in Volhynia. Above all, Bothmer must be forced back from the Strypa to the same longitude as the advance south of the Dniester. It was in such a purpose, rather than in a violent struggle for Lemberg or Kovel, that we must look for the motive which dominated Brussilov's strategy of the second stage.

The first task was to carry forward the right flank to a position of safety. So soon as the German counter-attack on the Stokhod in the second half of June had begun to ebb, preparations were made for broadening the Volhynian wedge. The left wing of Evert's central group was the Third Army, under Lesch, the general who had taken over the command from Radko Dmitrieff in the beginning of the Great Retreat, and had distinguished himself by his resolute holding battles on the south flank of the Warsaw salient. This army was brought south from the Pripet marshes and put under Brussilov's charge. Kaledin drew in his right, and the new force lay along the Styr astride of the Kovel–Sarny railway, facing Linsingen.

On 2nd July, in the Baranovitchi area, Evert's right wing, as we have seen, struck a second time against Woyrsch. It was an attack in force, supported with a good weight of artillery, and on a broad front the enemy's first line was carried and some thousands of prisoners taken. But Hindenburg was not to be caught napping, and presently the advance was checked with heavy Russian losses, and Evert's impetus died away. This thrust of the Russian right centre was in itself a substantive operation, designed to test the enemy's strength in a vital theatre. It failed to break his front, but it had one beneficent effect on the operations south of the marshes—it prevented any further reinforcement of Linsingen in front of Kovel at the critical moment when Lesch was about to strike.

That moment came at dawn on 4th July. From Kolki to north of Rafalovka stretches a wide, wooded plain between the Styr and the Stokhod. In the south near Kashovka there are low ridges, but all to the northwards is as flat as the Libyan desert.

Coarse grasses and poppies cover the dunes, and between them there are stretches of swamp and great areas of melancholy pinewoods. North of Rafalovka the marshy region of the Pripet begins, where there could be no continuous front, but only isolated forts on the knuckles of dry ground, connected by precarious trenches among the lagoons. On this marshy region Lesch had no designs. It was the protection he desired for his flank. His aim was the sandy plain beyond which, thirty miles to the west, crawled the sluggish Stokhod. The brilliant weather of June had dried up most of the swamps, and given him the one chance which might occur in the twelvemonth.

The action began with such an artillery preparation as had not yet been seen on the Russian side. The guns opened on a front of more than thirty miles, pounding the Austrian positions east of the Styr between Kolki and Rafalovka. Soon the air was clouded with dust as the sand of the entrenchments was scattered by shell. The two main attacks were at Kolki and just north of Rafalovka, the salient formed by the Chartorysk position being cut in upon on its two flanks. By the night of 4th July Lesch was over the Styr north of Rafalovka, and had pushed his right as far as Vulka Galuzyiskaya, some twelve miles from the river line. Next day the latter position, defended by three lines of barbed-wire entanglements fitted with land mines, was carried, the stubborn resistance of the Bavarians at Kolki was broken down, and the river bridged. The following day, 6th July, Kostiukhnovka, west of Kolodye, was won, and Raznitse, north of Kolki. That marked the end of the Chartorysk salient. The apex fell back in disorder, and by the evening of 7th July the Russian cavalry were in Manievitche station, on the Kovel–Sarny railway, about half-way between the Styr and the Stokhod, and the two wings of Lesch's advance had joined hands. Moreover, on his extreme right, on the very fringe of the marshes, he had pushed forward from Yeziertsky and had reached the Stokhod at Novo Tcherevisghe. The highroad from the latter place to Kolki by way of Manievitche was now wholly in his hands. On 8th July, in conjunction with Kaledin's right, he crossed the upper Stokhod at Ugly and Arsenovitche, where the river makes a sharp bend to the east. The Russians were now upon the Stokhod line between the Kovel–Rovno and the Kovel–Sarny railways.

After the first stern grapple the enemy's retreat had become almost a flight. Through the dry bent of the dunes and the shattered pinewoods the Russian infantry swept forward like men

possessed. Nothing stayed their remorseless progress. The enemy fired the villages as he retreated, and in that blazing midsummer weather Lesch advanced through a land cloudy by day and flaming skyward by night. And always in the van went the grey Cossack cavalry, clinging to the rear and flanks of the broken infantry. In four days Lesch had advanced twenty-five miles on a front of forty. He had taken 300 officers, including two regimental commanders, over 12,000 unwounded men, forty-five guns, including some heavy batteries, and large quantities of machine guns, ammunition, and military stores. Above all, he had won his immediate strategic purpose. The right flank of the Volhynian wedge was secured against any counter-stroke.

But now that the Stokhod was reached, the problem became harder. Kovel, that vital centre, was only some twenty odd miles distant, and on it converged the two railways which had been the Russian lines of supply. It was clear that Linsingen would fight desperately to cover his citadel. The Stokhod was a marshy stream with wide beds of reeds on either side, and on the western bank the ground rose slightly, so as to give the defence better observation. An alternative position had been prepared there during the previous autumn, and every nerve was now strained to make it impregnable. Though the river had been crossed at various points, yet the river line was far from being won, and about the middle of July the Russian advance had begun to stagnate into ordinary trench warfare.

It was about this time that the Russian High Command saw fit to announce to the world their intention. "On the issue of these battles," so ran the communiqué, "undoubtedly depends not only the fate of Kovel and its strongly fortified zone, but also to a great degree all the present operations on our front. In the event of the fall of Kovel, new and important perspectives will open out for us, for the road to Brest Litovsk, and in some degree the roads to Warsaw, will be uncovered." This was not the usual language of the Russian Staff, nor was it the language of a prudent general who did not desire to share his secrets with the enemy. It is difficult to regard the announcement as other than a ruse. Brussilov wished Hindenburg to believe that he intended to break his teeth on Kovel as the Crown Prince had broken his on Verdun, and thereby to delude him as to the direction of the next effort. For, after his fashion, the Russian commander was making plans elsewhere.

So far the Russian Eleventh Army, under Kuropatkin's old Chief of Staff, had played a lesser *rôle* than those of Kaledin and

Lechitski. Its right wing had, indeed, crossed the Ikva and collaborated with Kaledin in the thrust south of Lutsk to the Galician border. But now it was cast for a major part, for against the south side of the Lutsk salient Linsingen proposed to institute a great offensive, which should do more than counterbalance the Russian gain on the Stokhod. The Austrian line, held by Boehm-Ermolli's left wing, ran—after the Russian withdrawal of the second half of June—from the village of Shklin by Ugrinov and Mikhailovka to the Styr, and then south across the little Plashevka through wooded hills to the frontier town of Radzivilov. It was served by the many roads leading from Lemberg, by the Lemberg–Brody railway, and, so far as concerned its left wing, by the Lemberg–Stoyanov line. There, in the second week of July, fresh divisions were in process of concentration, some brought from as far afield as the Dvina, Verdun, and the Trentino. An attack in force would, it was hoped, drive back Kaledin behind Lutsk and Dubno, force Lesch to retreat from the Stokhod, and wipe out Brussilov's Volhynian gains. The date of the great effort was fixed for 18th July.

Brussilov got wind of the plan, and resolved to strike hard and quick before the danger had time to mature. Sakharov began to move during the night of 15th July. During the next two days he forced Boehm-Ermolli's centre back upon the upper Styr. At the same time he struck against the line Bludov–Zlotchevka, farther north. On 16th July, pivoting on Bludov, he turned the Austrian flank, and shepherded it southward for seven miles. At Mikhailovka on that day he took three huge ammunition dumps which Linsingen had prepared for his army's offensive. The enemy in this sector was back at Gorokhov, where he endeavoured in vain to regain ground by counter-attacks. On that one day, 16th July, Sakharov took 317 officers, 12,637 men, and thirty guns.

Then the dry weather broke, and torrential rains fell, as at the same date they fell on the Somme. But in spite of the difficult country Sakharov did not halt. He was advancing in a half-moon, forcing the enemy from the north against the Lipa, and from the east against the Styr. On 20th July he attacked and carried Berestechko, where, in the seventeenth century, John Casimir, King of Poland, had routed the invading Tartars; and next day he crossed the Styr, having in this action taken 300 officers and 12,000 men. He had driven a wedge between the Austrian IV. Army and Bothmer by his defeat of Boehm-Ermolli, and was now in effect swinging south to operate against the left wing of Bothmer's army on the Sereth and the Strypa.

By 22nd July the Austrians began to evacuate Brody, remembering the fate of Lutsk. It was a place which might have been stoutly defended, for Boehm-Ermolli had his left on the Styr, and in front of his centre had the curve of the river Slonovka, a broad marsh, and more than a hundred square miles of forest. On his right he had the wooded hills at the source of the Ikva. Sakharov began his attack early on the morning of 25th July. The Russian infantry, creeping through the dark before the summer dawn, crossed the swamp of the Slonovka and forded the stream. In the centre they fought their way yard by yard through the dense forest west of Radzivilov, and after six attempts took the village of Opariptse. On the morning of 27th July the centre and right came into line, and by the evening had carried the Klekotov position five miles from Brody. Meantime the Russian left wing, which had met with less opposition, emerged from the forests south-east of the town. The fate of the place was now sealed, and at 6.30 on the morning of 28th July Sakharov entered Brody, which had been Boehm-Ermolli's headquarters. The battle, one of the bloodiest and sternest fought in the campaign, had been planned out in every detail beforehand by the Russian commander, and Brody fell within twenty-four hours of the scheduled time. In the three days' fight the Eleventh Army took 210 officers and 13,569 men, bringing the total of its captures since 16th July to 940 officers and 39,152 of other ranks. Forty-nine guns were part of the immense miscellaneous booty.

Even then Sakharov did not rest. The railway running southward from Brody to Lemberg joins at the town of Krasne the great trunk line which runs south-east through Tarnopol to Odessa. The new Russian front between Brody and Zalostse ran roughly parallel with that line, which was Bothmer's main avenue of communication—some twenty miles distant at Brody, and only ten at Zalostse. But to reach it a tangled region of forest and mere had to be crossed, where the Styr, the Bug, the Sereth, and the Strypa had their springs. All these valleys with their enclosing ridges ran at right angles to any Russian advance, and would give the enemy an endless series of strong alternative positions. Only one road crossed the wilderness, that from Brody to Zloczow; another farther east stopped short half-way at Pienaki.

The Austrians seem to have expected that Sakharov would move towards Krasne on the way to Lemberg. Instead he advanced due south, crossing the ridges east of the most difficult country, to the Pienaki–Podkamien line. This brought his front parallel to

Bothmer's main communications. On 4th August he attacked the line Nushche–Zagozhe, while Tcherbachev's right from Zalostse attacked also towards the Sereth. By the next evening Sakharov had won all the villages around the upper Sereth, and the following day, 6th August, was as far south as Reniov, not eight miles from the Tarnopol line. In three days he had taken 166 officers and 8,415 men. On 10th August he was in Nesterovtse, less than five miles from the railway. Bothmer's flank had been completely turned.

Meantime in Poliesia the new Guard Army, under Bezobrazov, had been brought south and placed between Lesch and Kaledin. On 28th July, just after midday, it attacked along the upper Stokhod. In the first hours of the fighting it broke through the enemy position, and took thirty-eight guns and 4,000 prisoners, mostly German. The river was crossed at many points, the cavalry went through, and two days later at one place the Russians were more than five miles west of the Stokhod. Linsingen was forced to relinquish the bend of the river at Kashovka, and fell back to a fresh set of prepared positions. But he was now on the alert, and the defence, laboriously constructed since the opening of the offensive on 4th June, proved too strong to be broken. On 2nd August the Russians were on the line Sitovitche–Yanovka, and next day made a desperate attack on the German position at the village of Rudka Mirynska. They carried the place, but it formed so acute a salient that, under pressure of counter-attacks, they were compelled to relinquish it. This action was the one serious failure in the operations—a failure due to imperfect reconnaissance and a complete lack of co-ordination. By the evening of 9th August 532 officers and 54,770 rank and file had fallen, and these the *élite* of the Russian armies.

The control of the Bukovina, which Lechitski had won in June, had little direct effect upon the campaign in Galicia. The province was strategically self-contained, or rather its importance lay in relation to Rumania, since it possessed all the gates into Moldavia. Its road and railway system was in no way vital to the Galician armies, as was proved in the previous year, when Russia held nearly all Galicia and most of the Carpathian passes without control of the Bukovina. But any advance from the east pushed to the west of Kolomea must bring Lechitski into contact with Bothmer's most indispensable communications. Above Halicz the Dniester flows through wide belts of marsh, and below Nizniov it enters

a rugged cañon ; the good crossings—two railways and three roads —were all between these two towns. The southern Galician trunk line ran from Stry to Stanislau and Buczacz, and was the main feeder of Bothmer's right wing. Moreover, one of the principal connections with Hungary was the line running from Stanislau by Delatyn to Maramaros Sziget, crossing the Jablonitza Pass. If Lechitski took Kolomea, he would cut one of the loops of the Hungarian line which ran from Delatyn by Kolomea to Stanislau ; if he reached Delatyn, he could cut the line altogether ; if he took Stanislau, he would cut the Stry–Buczacz railway ; and if he forced the Dniester crossings between Halicz and Nizniov, he would turn Bothmer's southern flank, and make his position on the Strypa wholly untenable.

Part of the debris of Pflanzer-Baltin's army retreated, as we have seen, in the direction of Stanislau, and passed under Bothmer's command, so that Bothmer's right wing was now holding the Dniester crossings from Halicz to Nizniov. Lechitski's first business was to take Kolomea. On 28th June he attacked the Austrians east of that town on the line Niezviska–Pistyn, stretching from the Dniester to the Carpathians. Partly owing to a brilliant flanking movement in the north by the Russian cavalry, the Austrian position collapsed like sand, and that evening 221 officers and 10,285 men were added to the total of prisoners. The following day, 29th June, the Russians entered Kolomea, to find that the enemy had retreated in such haste that the six railways and six highroads which converge there were scarcely damaged.

The next stroke must be against the Maramaros Sziget–Stanislau railway ; but it proved impossible to march up the Pruth valley straight on Delatyn. Accordingly Lechitski's left wing moved southward over the wooded hills around Berezov, while his right wing, in conjunction with Tcherbachev's troops north of the Dniester, advanced against Tlumatch. On the last day of June the latter place was carried, principally by a brigade of Circassian cavalry, who charged the trench lines without any previous artillery preparation. This success compelled Bothmer on the north bank to fall back several miles to conform to the Austrian withdrawal. The Russians were now within ten miles of the vital Dniester crossings, and the enemy made a desperate effort to stay their progress. On 2nd July, Bothmer, having received German reinforcements, counter-attacked, and compelled Lechitski to give a little ground and relinquish Tlumatch. The advance of his right wing was for the moment stayed.

Novo Troki
VILNA
Wirballen
Miriampol
Kalvarja
Olita
Miroslav
Orany
R. Meretchanka
Suwalki
Seyny
Drusskeniki
Ratchki
Augustovo Canal
Augustovo
Ozery
Lipsk
GRODNO
Grajevo
Skidel
Mosty
R. Zelianka
Ossowietz
R. Bobr
Volkovysk
R. Shara
Tykocin
Bialystok
Slonim
R. Narev
Narev
Rozany
Bielsk
Forest of Bielovieszk
Bielovieszk
R. Nurzec
Kartuzskaia Bereza
Pruzany
Malkin
Kletzchely
Drohiczyn
Mielnik
R. Bug
Janovo
Kobrin
Drohiczyn
PINSK
Marshes of Pinsk
Horodets Canal
Losice
R. Mukhovatz
BREST LITOVSK
Biala
R. Krzna
Samary
R. Pripet
Lukow
R. Bug
R. Wolitza
R. Wieprz
Vlodava
Novo Tcherevisgene
Yesiertsky
Vulka Galuzinskaya
Khvnovka
Kostiukhodye
Stobychva
Gorodok
Rafalovka
Manievitche
Khriask
Gulevitche
Okonsk
Sitovitche
Zagarovka
Chartoryisk
Kashovka
Ugly
Raznitse
Arsenovitche
Kovel
R. Styr
Rudka Miryńska
Kolki
Svidnika
Gadomitchi
Yanovka
LUBLIN
R. Bystritza
Hill 218
Biskupice
Pilaskowice
Wilkolaz
Krasnostav
Cholm
Vorontchin
Rojitche
Kisielin
Krasnik
Vladimir Volynsk
Zaturtsy
Lutsk
Olyka
Volhynian Triangle
Turobin
Lukachy
ROVNO
Zamosc
Sviniukhy
Bludov
Shklin
Ugrinov
Zlotchevka
Mlynov
Mikhailovka
Demidovka
Dubno
Gorokhov
R. Lipa
Berestechko
Sokal
Tomasov
R. Tanev
Stoyanov
R. Bug
Tarnogrod
Rava Russka
Kozin
Oparipstse
Radzivilov
Klekotov
Lezachov
Sieniawa
Lubaczowka
R. Lubaczowka
Kamionka
Zolkiev
BRODY
Podkamien
Jaroslav
R. San
Javorov
Krasne
Pienaki
Nushche
Alexinietz
Zlocztov
Zalostse
Remiov
Zagozhe
Pluhov
Zborov
Radymno
Malkovice
Mosciska
LEMBERG
Grodek
PRZEMYŚL
Hussakow
Przemyślany
Bobrka
Koniuchy
TARNOPOL
Brzezany
Tsentov
Smyhalin
Potutory
Saranchuki
Dobromil
Sambor
Komarno
Galicia
Zydaczow
Lipnitsa Dalna
Tremblova
Proskurov
Vinnitsa
Drohobycz
Zurawno
Zavalov
Miriampol
Halicz
Dezupol
Burkanov
Bar
Boryslav
Stryj
R. Dniester
R. Swica
R. Stryj
Rostoki Pass
Kalusch
Ciezov
Pavelcze
Rybno
Khryplin
Stanislau
Nizniov
Buczacz
Kuropiets
Potok
Czertkoff
Uzsok Pass
Koziowa
Uzsok
Tucholka
Carpathian Mts.
Vereczke Pass
Baskid or Volocz Pass
Wyzkow Pass
R. Ung
Ungvar
Czap
Munkacs
Nadworna
Stary Lysiec
Niezviska
Tlumatch
Usciezko Horodenka
Zalestchiki
Ustsie Biskupie
Mielnica
Kamenets Padolsky
Dniester
Mogilev
Okniza
KOLOMEA
Delatyn
Pistyn
Sniatyn
Dobronovstse
Toporoutz
Sloboda Rungurska
Kuty
CZERNOVITZ
Sadagora
Bojan
Kutchurmare
Delatyn or Jablonitza Pass
HUNGARY
Dorohoin
Byeltsi
Botosani
Bukovina
Máramaros Sziget
Stiol Pass
Mt. Kapul
Suezawa
Szasmár Nemiti
Nagy Banya
Kirlibaba Pass
Kimpolung
Dorna Watra
JASSY
Borgo Pass
RUMANIA
Des
Roman
Transylvania
R. Maros
R. Nagy Szamos
R. Moldova
R. Siretu
R. Pruth
R. Bistrita
Molodetchna
Lebedovo
Borisoff
R. Bobr
R. Beresina
MINSK
Ivie
Lida
R. Niemen
Novogrodek
R. Ptych
BOBRUISK
Baranovitchi
Slulsk
Ostrov
Pripet Marshes
Luninets
R. Pripet
Oginski Canal
Janovo
PINSK
Marshes of Pinsk
R. Stokhod
R. Turia
R. Styr
R. Horyn
Sarny
Olevsk
R. Sherefr
R. Ubort
R. Slavechna
R. Sviga
Iskorost
R. Usi
R. Irsha
Novograd Volynsk
SHITOMIR
R. Teterev
Polonnoe
BERDITSCHEW
Jampol
R. Slutsch
Starokonstantinov
Chmielnik
Volhynian Sarny group of Russian Armies
Volhynian Triangle
Reference
Russian Lines ..... shown thus
Direction of Enemy Attacks
Land over 2000 feet shown thus
1000
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40 50
THE MAPPA CO., LTD., LONDON.

Meantime his left flank and centre were carrying all before them. On 30th June the left wing was in Pistyn and Berezov; on 3rd July it was only six miles from the Maramaros Sziget–Stanislau railway, and next day it cut the line. The centre pressed on against Delatyn itself, and on 8th July the place was captured. The first vital strategic objective of Lechitski's advance had been attained. During the fighting between 23rd June and 7th July he had taken prisoner 674 officers and 30,875 men, and had captured eighteen guns.

The July rains were now beginning. The Dniester and the Pruth were in roaring flood, and all the country south of Stanislau was under water. In such conditions a halt had to be called in the most ardent advance, and only the left wing of the Russians, now among the Carpathian heights, could find dry ground on which to operate. For nearly a month the lull continued, and then on 7th August Lechitski struck again. This time it was on his right wing, towards Stanislau and the Dniester crossings. That day he recaptured Tlumatch, and reached the Dniester close to Nizniov. Next day Tcherbachev, north of the river, crossed the Kuropiets and came into line. On 9th August Khryplin, the railway junction south of Stanislau, was taken, and the Austrians evacuated the latter town. On 10th August Lechitski entered Stanislau. Next day, too, Tcherbachev was across the Zlota Lipa north of Nizniov.

Bothmer's position was now very grave. Sakharov, in the north, was close to the Lemberg–Tarnopol railway, which fed his left wing; Lechitski had cut the Maramaros Sziget line, and by his capture of Stanislau had cut also the Stry–Buczacz line, which fed his right wing. Moreover, Tcherbachev was actually round his flank north of Nizniov. There was nothing for it but retreat. The army which had made so stalwart a stand must bend its neck at last. Bothmer's right fell back from the Strypa upon the Zlota Lipa, his centre to Brzezany, and his left to behind Zborov, on the Lemberg–Tarnopol railway. With this retirement the second phase of Brussilov's offensive ended. It left the enemy in an awkward position, with both Kovel and Lemberg menaced by unbroken armies, and with Lechitski south of the Dniester, well on Bothmer's right rear.

The significance of the ten marvellous weeks which had elapsed since Brussilov launched his thunderbolt was not to be computed in mere gain of ground. Alexeiev played for a great stake, and had no care for petty reconquests. It was not the regaining of the

Volhynian fortresses or the Bukovina that mattered, but the fact that the enemy in his retreat had been compelled to lengthen his front by at least two hundred miles, and was left with fewer men to hold it. A retreat in most cases shortens a line; in the East the German-Austrian front was straight to begin with, and retirement made it sag and dip so that its total length was greatly increased. Over 300,000 prisoners had been taken, and the dead and badly wounded may have amounted to twice as many again.

How desperate was the crisis may be judged by the steps which Hindenburg took to meet it. During June, while the front on the West was quiet except at Verdun, Germany transferred thence four complete divisions and a number of odd battalions, making a total of some seventy-three battalions. When the Somme battle began, her power of reinforcement was seriously crippled; but the necessity was urgent, and she continued to send divisions—exhausted divisions, whose fighting value was gravely reduced. In July, for example, she transferred from West to East three divisions and some odd battalions, making a total of thirty-seven battalions. The process continued during August and September. To anticipate—if we take the period between 4th June and the middle of September, we find that Germany sent in the way of reinforcements to the line north of the Pripet an infantry division from the West, and to the line south of the Pripet sixteen infantry divisions and three cavalry divisions from north of the Pripet, fifteen divisions from the West, and one division from the Balkans. Austria brought to the area south of the Pripet seven divisions from the Italian front—divisions ill to spare, since Cadorna was busy with his counter-offensive. Finally, two Turkish divisions, the 19th and 20th, were brought west and given to Bothmer. There can be no difference of opinion as to the vigour and resource which the German Staff, with their ally almost out of action, showed in meeting the danger. But the rushing of wearied troops across the breadth of Europe was an expedient such as no sane commander would contemplate except in the last necessity.

Austria's disasters led to a complete revision of the Eastern commands. A new army, called at first the XII. and afterwards the III., was formed to take position between Bothmer and Pflanzer-Baltin. From 30th July Hindenburg was put in command of the whole Eastern front, except the three southernmost armies, which, as a solace to Austrian sentiment, were made a group-command for the heir-apparent, the Archduke Charles, a young gentleman of twenty-nine. The Archduke Joseph Ferdinand, commanding the

Austrian IV. Army, and Pflanzer-Baltin, commanding the VII. Army, vanished into obscurity. Von Tersztyansky took the Archduke Joseph's place, and a new VII. Army was formed under von Kirchbach. The front was thus apportioned between crabbed age and youth. The Austro-German dispositions were now from north to south: Eichhorn's group, comprising his own X. Army, the German VIII. Army (Otto von Below), and Scholtz's detachment; Prince Leopold's group, comprising the German XII. Army (Fabeck), and the German IX. Army (Woyrsch); Linsingen's group, comprising his own army of the Bug, the Austrian IV. Army (Tersztyansky), and the Austrian II. Army (Boehm-Ermolli). All these were under Hindenburg. In the south the Archduke Charles had in his group Bothmer's Army, the Austrian III. Army (Kövess), and the Austrian VII. Army (Kirchbach). The point had all but been reached when the supreme command of the Central Powers would be formally vested in Germany's hands.

As against these kaleidoscopic changes the Russian battle-front remained the same as on 4th June, save that in August Kuropatkin became Governor-General of Turkestan, and Russki returned once again to the Northern Command. Ten weeks of constant fighting had welded the armies into a formidable weapon. The new thing, the tremendous fact which emerged from the battle, was that Russia had shown that she could adapt herself to modern warfare, and could create a machine to put her manhood on even terms with the enemy. The staff work, too, had been admirable, and the patient sagacity of the leadership beyond praise. Alexeiev, Brussilov, and each of the four army commanders had revealed conspicuous military talent. The battles were generals' battles as much as soldiers' battles—they were won in the brain of the High Command before they were won in the field. But the effort had stretched her powers to their extreme limits; it was her floodmark, which could not be passed—which, unhappily, could not be reached again.

CHAPTER LVIII.

THE BATTLE OF VERDUN—SECOND STAGE.

May 3–August 8, 1916.

Position at Verdun in May—Loss of Mort Homme—The French attack Douaumont—Loss of Fort Vaux—The last German Attacks at Fleury and Thiaumont—End of the Main Battle.

(*Map*, p. 98.)

THE first stage of the Battle of Verdun ended on 9th April with the defeat of the German purpose. Defeat, indeed, had befallen the Imperial Crown Prince weeks before, ever since the merciless usury of Pétain had forced his enemy to pay a price in excess of any possible gain. Verdun had long ago passed out of the sphere of pure strategy into that of politics. It had become a fatal magnet, drawing to itself the German strategic reserves, not for military ends, but because the High Command had burned its boats and could not retire. They had staked their reputation on the capture of the little city, and without grave loss of credit could not break off the action. Towards the end of April the French Staff believed that the battle was virtually over; but they overestimated the capacity of their opponents for the rigour of the game. Germany dared not take the heroic course—her commitments were too deep; and a second battle was about to begin, not less desperate than the first, in which her sole purpose was, by blind blows on a narrow front, to wear down the French strength. The significance of Verdun itself had long since gone. It mattered very little for the main interests of the campaign whether or not a German soldier set foot in its shattered streets. Germany's own hope was to weaken what she still believed to be the waning man-power of France, and to forestall the combined Allied attack which since Christmas had been her nightmare.

In April Pétain succeeded Langle de Cary as commander of the central *secteur*, from Soissons to Verdun. His promotion to one of the three group commands was a well-deserved tribute to his superb achievement. He was succeeded in the command of the

Second Army by Nivelle, who, like Pétain, had at the outbreak of war been only a colonel. As we have seen, during April there was no great action in the Verdun section, but only minor attacks and counter-attacks and an intermittent bombardment. At the end of the month the French line lay as follows:—From Avocourt, in the west, it ran through the eastern fringes of the Avocourt Wood covering the famous redoubt, along the slope of Hill 287, and across the northern slopes of Hill 304; dipped into the ravine of the Esnes branch of the Forges brook; climbed the western slopes of Mort Homme, covering the summit; then fell back to the south of the Goose's Crest, and reached the Meuse at Cumières. On the right bank of the river the line ran on the south side of the Côte du Poivre, through the Wood of Haudromont, along the south side of the Douaumont ridge, just short of the crest; dipped into the Vaux glen, passing through the western skirts of Vaux village, and then ran south along the eastern scarp of the Heights of the Meuse, covering Vaux fort.

The position on the left bank was curious. At Hill 304 the French front was in the shape of a horseshoe facing north, with the ends in Avocourt Wood and in the gully of the Esnes brook, and the centre flung well forward on the north side of the ridge. East of Mort Homme the position was reversed. There the German front was the horseshoe facing south, having one end in the Esnes gully, and the other north of Cumières, while the centre bulged over the crest well into the Wood of Cumières. Obviously this position, in the shape of the letter S lying on its side, exposed both combatants to the danger of flanking attacks, and it was the object of the German Command to straighten it out. Such a straightening would give them Hill 304 and Mort Homme, which had been the key-points of the first battle in this section. But at the end of April these had not the importance they bore in early March. The main French position was now well behind, towards the Charny ridge. It should be remembered that on the left bank of the Meuse the Germans were still fighting for positions corresponding to those which they had won on the right bank in the first week of the battle. The Hill 304–Mort Homme line was paralleled on the east by the Louvemont ridge. Charny was the line parallel to Douaumont.

The second stage of the Battle of Verdun divides itself naturally into three main episodes. First came the attempt of the German right wing to carry Hill 304 and Mort Homme, and press the French back on their last position—an attempt which succeeded in its

immediate but failed in its ultimate purpose. The second, simultaneous with the first operation, was a vigorous counter-attack by the French on the Douaumont ridge. The third—the last phase of the battle—was a concentrated German assault from Douaumont against the last line covering Verdun, which gave them the fort of Vaux, the work of Thiaumont, and for a moment the village of Fleury, and brought them within four miles of the walls of Verdun.

I.

After a week of inaction there began on the 3rd of May a steady and violent bombardment of the north slope of Hill 304, more than a hundred German batteries concentrating on the narrow front. Not only were the French first lines bombarded, but the crest of the slope behind them became one mass of spouting volcanoes, which resulted in changing the shape of the sky-line to an observer looking north from Verdun. All that night the fire continued; the trenches were obliterated, and the defence sheltered as best it could in shell holes. There was a lull on the morning of the 4th, and then the artillery began again, and continued with increasing fury till the afternoon. At four o'clock reconnoitring parties of German infantry advanced, and were beaten back by French rifle fire. At five o'clock the enemy made a massed attack. Most of the French advanced troops had been buried, their rifles broken, and their machine guns put out of action by the bombardment. The result was that the Germans occupied a considerable stretch of the first line north of Hill 304. That same day the French had themselves attacked at Mort Homme, and pushed their left horn forward.

On the night of the 4th there was a brilliant French counter-attack at Hill 304, which pressed the enemy back at the point of danger which he held just above the Esnes ravine. On the 5th the German bombardment moved a little westward, and attacked the ragged little coppice called the Camard Wood, just south of the Haucourt–Avocourt road. There lay the French 66th Regiment of Infantry, one of whose captains has described that devastating fire. It began at four o'clock in the morning, and lasted till 3.30 p.m. "The dug-out in which I was was hewn out of solid rock, but it swayed like a boat on a stormy sea, and you could not keep a candle alight in it. The Camard Wood that morning had had the appearance of a wood, though all tattered and broken; but by the evening it had lost all semblance of anything

but a patch of earth." At 3.30 p.m. the enemy's infantry attacked; but the heroic 66th and 32nd Regiments had still a sting left in them. With their rifle fire they halted the advancing waves, and then small parties of gallant men leaped from the wreckage of their trenches and charged with the bayonet. It was sufficient to check the enemy's advance. That night and the next day there was a lull, except for the steady bombardment.

On Sunday, 7th May, came a more formidable assault. It was delivered on all three sides of Hill 304—from the Wood of Avocourt, from the direction of Haucourt, and in the ravine of the Esnes stream between Hill 304 and Mort Homme. An intense bombardment began at dawn, and a barrage cut off all communication with the rear. The Germans attacked with the equivalent of an army corps, by far the most considerable attempt yet made in this part of the front. Five times during that Sunday they advanced, and five times they were thrown back. In the last attack they carried the communication trench east of Hill 304, and pushed up the ravine. The French promptly counter-attacked, and after a stern struggle lasting well into the darkness they recovered the communication trench, and by the morning of the 8th were able to consolidate their line. But that day's fighting had altered the position. The crest of Hill 304 was so bare and shell-swept that it could not be retained, and the French line now ran just south of it, though they had advanced posts still on the summit ridge. That same day there was an action on the right bank of the Meuse, between Haudromont Wood and Douaumont, where the Germans won a slight advantage. North of Thiaumont farm they carried the French first line for 500 yards on both sides of the Fleury–Douaumont road.

Thereafter for some days the fighting on the left bank became desultory. On 17th May the Germans, after their usual fashion, having failed in their frontal attack on Hill 304, set themselves to turn it from the direction of Avocourt Wood. The action began at six in the evening, and soon it spread over the whole front from Avocourt to the Meuse. On the 18th there were repeated attacks on the west flank of Hill 304, and also on the north-east from the Esnes glen. On the 20th the bombardment became especially severe on Mort Homme. It will be remembered that while the Germans held Hill 265 the French held the true summit, Hill 295, but held it as a salient, for their flanks fell back sharply on both sides of it. About two in the afternoon the German infantry attacked the salient from north-east and north-west, and carried the French front lines. In the eastern part they were driven out

again; but in the west they held their ground, and pushed on towards the French second line along the slopes of Mort Homme directly overlooking the Esnes brook. These attacks were delivered with great resolution, with large numbers of men, and with utter recklessness of loss. By Sunday, 21st May, the summit of Mort Homme had passed from French hands, and their line now lay along the southern slopes. That same day the enemy made stupendous efforts to push his way up the Esnes glen. But the impetus had slackened, and the French were comfortable enough in their new positions.

That fight for Mort Homme was one of the most costly incidents of the whole battle. The Germans between Avocourt and Cumières used at least five divisions, partly drawn from the famous 1st Bavarian Corps, which had lately been on the British front. Their losses were enormous. The ravine of the Esnes was cumbered with dead, and there were slopes on Hill 304 and on Mort Homme where the ground was raised several metres by mounds of German corpses. The two crests were lost, but their value had largely gone. The French main position now was the front Avocourt–Esnes–Hill 310–the Bois Bourrus–Marre, and their lines on the southern slopes of the much-contested ridges were only advanced posts. The German success had brought them half a mile nearer Verdun; but every yard of that advance had been amply paid for.

II.

But stern as the conflict had been, it was to become sterner still. From 21st February to 20th May the French artillery had fired 9,795,000 shells; in the next twenty-five days they were to expend 4,200,000. We turn to the right bank of the Meuse, where Douaumont was once more to become the scene of grim fighting. The time had arrived for a French counter-attack to ease the pressure on the western flank. They began their bombardment some time on Saturday, the 20th. On the 21st they won ground on both flanks, capturing the Haudromont quarry, and taking a trench near Vaux. These attacks were designed to divert the attention of the enemy from the massing of troops on the French centre, opposite Douaumont fort. The troops chosen for the principal attack were the 5th Division of the 3rd Corps, who on 3rd April had retaken the Caillette Wood. It was one of the most famous of French divisions, commanded by Mangin, who had been with Marchand on his great African journey; had fought under Lyautey

in Morocco; and had won great honour at every stage since the retreat from the Sambre. On 21st April he had issued an order to his men: "You are about to re-form your depleted ranks. Many of you will return home, and will bear with you to your families the warlike ardour and the thirst for vengeance which inspire you. But there is no rest for us French so long as the barbarous enemy treads the sacred soil of our fatherland. There is no peace for the world till the monster of Prussian militarism has been laid low. Therefore prepare yourselves for new battles, when you will have full confidence in your superiority over an enemy whom you have so often seen to flee and surrender before your bayonets and grenades. You are certain of that now. Any German who enters a trench of the 5th Division is dead or a prisoner; any ground seriously attacked by the 5th Division is captured ground. You march under the wings of Victory."

The assault was fixed for Monday, 22nd May. As the sun rose the German kite balloons appeared in regular lines over the horseshoe of upland. But at 8 a.m. a French airplane squadron was seen hovering above the German "sausages." They had with them a bomb, now used for the first time, which in falling burst into a shower of lesser bombs, each of which in turn gave out minute particles of a burning chemical. In a few minutes six of the German kite balloons had exploded in flames. The infantry, waiting in the trenches, watched the spectacle with joy. "We have now bandaged the Boche's eyes," said one to another. The Germans, scenting the new peril, kept up a ceaseless fire of shrapnel, to which the French replied, till the firmament twanged like a taut fiddle-string. At ten minutes to twelve precisely the men of the 10th Brigade of the 3rd Division rose from their trenches.

The whole operation had been most skilfully planned. The French were close up to the fort, only some 350 yards distant. The Germans had dug trench lines south of it, but it would appear that these and the wire entanglements had been largely destroyed by the French fire. The 129th Regiment of Infantry was directed against the fort itself, while on the left the 36th Regiment and on the right the 74th Regiment moved in support. The French streamed from their cover in open order, and with unfaltering resolution made straight for the fort. The 129th Regiment in ten minutes was inside the south-west angle of the defence. At noon precisely a Bengal light was burned, and the watchers behind knew that the centre had won its objective.

On the left the 36th Regiment stormed all the German trenches

up to the Douaumont–Fleury road. Inside the fort the 129th pushed on, fighting from yard to yard of the honeycombed debris. It took all the western and southern parts, and the north side up to the northern angle. Engineers were put in to organize the defence, and machine-gun battalions were brought up to hold the captured positions. In the first hour over a hundred prisoners were sent back from the fort. The only hitch was on the right, where the 74th Regiment found a harder task. Its left had advanced rapidly; but its right was hung up by the cross-fire from the German trenches, where the bombardment had been less effective. The result was that the Germans were able to maintain themselves in the north-eastern corner.

All day the fighting in the fort went on. The French by the evening held two-thirds of the position, and had consolidated their defence. The counter-attack did not come till darkness had fallen. About 10 p.m. great masses of German troops assembled east of Hardaumont Wood, and a furious bombardment was directed on the French lines west of the fort. An infantry attack followed, which made a little ground. In the fort itself the new garrison won some yards during the darkness. From daybreak on the 23rd there was a steady bombardment, and many infantry attacks on the position. But the 129th Regiment, though losing heavily, clung to their gains, and when next morning the whole brigade was relieved, it had the proud consciousness that it had yielded not an inch of the ground it had won. On that day, however, two fresh Bavarian divisions came up in the cover of the ravines in the Wood of La Vauche and the Bezonvaux glen, and attacked in front and in flank. It was not Nivelle's plan to continue a costly struggle beyond the point which in his eyes marked the profitable limit. The fort was retaken by the Germans, but the French managed to retain on its east and west flanks some of the trenches they had won.

Meantime the battle had waxed hotter on its western flank. On Tuesday, 23rd May, the Germans made a great effort to debouch from the new positions they had gained at Mort Homme, and to straighten their front. Under a terrific curtain fire from the French heavy guns they attempted to push their left wing into Cumières between the Meuse and the hill, and to advance their right wing up the Esnes ravine. Again and again they failed, for they could not establish themselves close enough to the French to forbid the latter the use of their high-explosive barrage. But at last, in the Esnes glen, largely by means of liquid fire, they managed to carry

the French front trenches. During the night the German left, debouching from the woods of Cumières and Caurettes, and pushing along the Meuse bank, managed to gain a footing in Cumières village. This, it will be remembered, they had temporarily achieved before in the great attack of 9th April. The place became a slaughter-house, and the day of Wednesday, 24th May, was one of the bloodiest since the opening of the battle. By the evening the enemy had won all Cumières, and had pushed his infantry along the railway line almost to Chattancourt station. A French counter-attack drove him back to Cumières, and the fighting became desperate in the thickets and the low ground between the railway and the river. The French main position was now defined as Chattancourt–the south slopes of Hill 304–Avocourt. Both Mort Homme and Hill 304 were lost.

Till the end of the month the struggle continued. On the evening of Friday, the 26th, the French, attacking from the east, got into the skirts of Cumières village. On Sunday evening, the 28th, there was an abortive German attack from the Crows' Wood against the French trenches on the south slopes of Mort Homme. After that there came a great bombardment, which lasted through most of Monday, the 29th—the hundredth day of the battle. At three in the afternoon of that day German forces attacked all along the front between Avocourt and the river, in a great attempt to drive the French from their position on the south slopes of Hill 304 and Mort Homme. There were now five fresh divisions in action—two of them being from the general reserve at Cambrai, and two from the VI. Army—and the enemy's immediate aim was to carry the salient between Mort Homme and Cumières. It was the last great effort on the western side of the river, and it won only the ground which artillery fire had made untenable. The French first-line trenches south of the Caurettes Wood were obliterated. There was also a big attack from Cumières towards Chattancourt, which French counter-attacks drove back to its old line. In those days there was seen what was up to date the heaviest bombardment of the whole campaign. Both in number of shells and in casualties in a limited area all records were surpassed. But no result was obtained. On the last day of May the French position was unbroken; they had not even been forced back upon their main defences; and the road to Verdun by the left bank of the Meuse was as firmly held as when, on 2nd March, the guns first opened from the Wood of Forges.

III.

The battle was to end as it had begun—on the Heights of the Meuse. While the struggle had been furious at Mort Homme the Germans had made certain useful gains on the right bank. On 25th May they had recaptured Haudromont quarry and extended their hold across the upper part of Thiaumont ravine. On the 27th they pushed their right wing to the south-west border of that part of the big Haudromont Wood which was called variously the Wood of Thiaumont and the Wood of Nawé. On Monday, the 29th, the heavy guns began near Vaux a "preparation" which warned Nivelle of what was coming. With mathematical exactness the German effort had swung from flank to flank, and the failure which was presently announced on the left bank meant a new effort on the right. There they were within five miles of Verdun, and the recapture of Douaumont fort and their possession of the rest of the Douaumont crest gave them direct observation over all the intervening ground. From about the same position which they held on 26th February they were to make, after a hundred days, their final effort to gain what they had promised themselves to win in four. One-sixth of the whole artillery of the German army was assembled there, and the Emperor had ordered that Verdun should fall by 16th June.

The German plan was an advance in front and flank to turn the inner fortified line which defended the city, and to make the flanking movement possible they must first carry the fort of Vaux. That fort—obsolete, declassed and dismantled, and now a mere *point d'appui* in the field line—had, since Douaumont was lost, become the key-point of the French defence on the plateau. It covered the glen of Vaux, and all the eastern approaches to the great fort of Souville. For twenty-six hours the enemy guns played on the French lines, and then on 1st June their infantry carried the remains of the Caillette Wood, won the ground south of Vaux pond, and fought their way into the Fumin Wood. At the same time an attack was delivered from Damloup in the east, a village from which the French were compelled to retire. The German aim was to make two converging assaults—from the north-west along the ridge from the Fumin Wood, and from the south-east up the gully from Damloup.

All the day of Friday, the 2nd, and Saturday, the 3rd, the contest continued. Wave after wave of Bavarian infantry surged up the hillsides, only to be mown down by the French fire. The fort

had long ago been smashed by the heavy guns, for since March the enemy had directed on it a daily average of 8,000 shells ; but in the deep cellars the little garrison, under Major Raynal,* continued their resistance. The place was as bare and open as a target buoy at sea, and after the 2nd, when the Germans won the Fumin ridge, there was no direct communication between the defence and the French lines. This isolation had not been achieved without a desperate struggle. Scattered sections of trench, which till occupied prevented complete envelopment, were held by detachments of the 101st Regiment for three days, under torrents of bombs and a fire of high explosives which observers likened to a tropical downpour. It was not till 9 p.m. on 5th June that this gallant remnant retired from a fight which began early on the morning of 1st June.

By the 2nd, as we have seen, the fort was cut off from news, for no dispatch-bearer could cross the zone of death. The defence tried to establish a system of signals, but the troops a mile away could not see them. A volunteer managed to make his way out, and, by shifting the position of the signallers at the other end, established some kind of communication. Another most gallant man, a stretcher-bearer of the 124th Division called Vanier, worked patiently among the wounded, dressing their wounds and hiding them in crevices among the ruins. When there were no more wounded to tend he went out to fetch water, for thirst was the supreme torment. Four hundred men had taken refuge in the fort, and the garrison numbered 150 ; the air was thick with fumes and dust ; every throat was parched, and every drop of water had to be brought from a distance through a land churned by great shells into the likeness of a yeasty sea.

For five days Raynal and his men performed the patently impossible. Presently the enemy won the outer walls ; but the main building was still defended, and a machine gun in every cranny made it death for the invaders to enter the courtyard. The fight was now largely subterranean. The enemy let down baskets of grenades to a level with the loopholes, and tried to swing them through the openings so as to explode inside. The limit of human endurance came on Tuesday, the 6th. Raynal sent his last message : " We are near the end. Officers and men have done their whole duty. *Vive la France!*" Vanier, that incomparable *brancardier*, managed to escape with a few wounded through a

* He had only returned from sick leave on the night of 20th May. His story of the defence, *Journal du Commandant Raynal : Le Fort de Vaux*, 1919, is one of the best narratives produced by the war.

grating ; and, after perilous adventures while crawling through the enemy's ground, most of the party reached the French lines. That was the last news from the fort. Raynal was removed to Mainz, and permitted by his captors to retain his sword. He was made Commander of the Legion of Honour by the French Republic, and at a special review at the Invalides the insignia of his new honour were conferred upon his wife.

The capture of Vaux fort saw the beginning of a furious German assault upon the whole section from Thiaumont eastwards. The direct objective was Fort Souville, which had now become the main outwork of Verdun. The French front on 7th June ran from Hill 321, below the Côte du Poivre and the Côte de Froide Terre, through the *fortin* of Thiaumont, along the slopes defined by the woods of Chapitre, Fumin, and Laufée, and then south along the fringes of the hills east of Eix. Between the Côte de Froide Terre and the plateau where stood the forts of Souville and Tavannes was a deep-cut hollow, down which ran the road from Vaux to Verdun. The village of Fleury lay on the western lip of this ravine. The easiest and most open approach to Souville was by way of Fleury and the western ridge, for on the east the woods gave strong defensive positions.

For four days there was a lull. Pétain, who knew what was coming, warned Joffre of the gravity of the case and begged him to expedite the great attack on the Somme ; but the Commander-in-Chief replied that at all costs Verdun must be defended. Then on the night of Sunday, the 11th, after a bombardment, the enemy managed to gain a little ground in the Fumin Wood. Next day the assault was on the other flank, delivered by a division and a half of Bavarian and Pomeranian troops. A bit of the French line on Hill 321 west of Thiaumont was captured, and the enemy was within $3\frac{3}{4}$ miles of Verdun. All through the week Thiaumont and the adjacent slopes of Hills 321, 316, and 320 were the theatre of heavy fighting. The great effort came on Friday, 23rd June. At eight o'clock in the morning nineteen regiments, drawn from seven different divisions, were flung against a front of three miles. The French right stood firm, but the left was driven back between Hill 320 and Hill 321, and Thiaumont fort fell. Meantime the German centre, coming down the ravine from the Wood of Caillettes, attacked Fleury village, and got into its outskirts ; but a French counter-attack, admirably timed, drove back the invaders. The position in the evening was that the German centre stood out in a wedge towards Fleury, some eight hundred yards in advance of their general front.

Reference.
Allies ..... shewn thus
Land over 1000 Feet
750
Scale
0 1 2 3 4 5 MILES
Sivry
Bayonville
Remonville
Mont-dev
Villers devant-Dun
Lion
Milly
Dun-sur Meuse
Murvaux
Brandeville
Breheville
Bois de Jametz
Delut
Vittarville
Sorbey
Bois de Belchenet
St. Laurent
Merles
Pillon
Rouvrois
Ignecourt
Ancreville
Fontaines
Lissey
Ecurey
Bois d'Ecurey
Reuvillers
Mangiennes
Duzey
Landres
Bois de Bantheville
Bantheville
Liny
Haraumont
Damvillers
Billy
Spincourt
St. Juvin
Sommerance
Cunel
Brieulles
Vilosnes
Romagne
Sivry
Wavrilles
Chaumont
Loison
Fleville
Gesnes
Cierges
Wantillois
Dannevoux
Moirey
Gouraincourt
Exermont
Chatel Chehery
Echsfontaine
Ivoiry
Septsarges
Cercourt
Consenvoye
Flabas
Azannes
Senon
Baulny
Montfaucon
Guisy
Haumont
Brabant
Gremilly
Charpentry
Forges
Samogneux
Beaumont
Amel
Montblainville
Bethincourt
Regneville
Maucourt
Ornel
Malancourt
Haucourt
Champneuville
Louvemont
Bezonvaux
Morgemoulin
Foameix
Varennes
Cumieres
Vacherauville
Dieppe
Fromezey
Etain
Avocourt
Chattancourt
Marre
Bras
Charny
Vauquois
Esnes
Damloup
Hautecourt
Warcq
Montzeville
Fleury
Belleville
Eix
Hermeville
Moranville
Lachalade
Neuvilly
Bethelainville
Fromerville
VERDUN
Heights of the Meuse
Moulainville
Chatillon
Dombasle
Sivry
Beirupt
Watronville
Le Neufour
Parois
Jouy
Belleray
Haudainville
Ville en Woevre
Brabant
Manheulles
les Islettes
Vraincourt
Brocourt
Biercourt
Landrecourt
Haudiomont
La Grange aux Bois
Clermont
Auzeville
Souhesme-la-Petite
Fresnes
Jubecourt
Ville-aux Cousances
les Souhesme
Bonzee
Sommedieue
Tresauvaux
Forêt de Menehould
Filleau
Lemmes
Ancemont
Combres
Julvecourt
Froidos
Senoncourt
Forêt de Monthairons
Mouilly
Lavoye
Autrecourt
Osches
Genicourt
St. Remy
Hannonville
Ippecourt
Souilly
Rupt-en Woevre
Ambly
Fleury
St. Andre
Villers
Ranzieres
Vaux-les Palameix
Faucaucourt
Tilly
Troyon
Bois de Pontoux
Canal
R. Meuse
R. Aire
R. Andon
R. de Nivants
R. de Blanche
R. de Gesnes
R. de Septsarges
R. d'Azannes
R. Orne
R. Loison
R. Ornain
R. Chee
R. de Tavannes
R. de Renaroue
R. de Reneselle
R. Longeau
R. Gousannes
R. Hutebies
R. de la Biesme
R. de Rupt
R. de Haudiomont
Rau de Lanoy
Rau d'Eix
Rau de Tavannes
Rau de Renaroue
Bois de Wapremont
Bois de Romagne
Bois de la Montagne
Bois de Consenvoye
Bois de Septsarges
Bois de Forges
Bois de Malancourt
Bois de Cheppy
Bois de Ranicourt
Bois de Bourrus
Bois de Senoncourt
Bois de la Voie des Loups
Bois d'Hinvaux
Bois Haut
Bois de Renzieres
Bois de St. Maurice
Bois de Tilly
Bois de Damvillers
Bois de Sartelle
Bois de Jametz
Bois du Grand Failly
Bois de Lissey
Bois de la Cote
Bois de Haumont
Bois de Gremilly
Bois de Ville
Bois de Caures
Bois de Herbebois
Bois de Chaume
Bois de Fosses
Bois de Vaux
Bois de Tilly
Bois de Bourrus
Bois de Sartelles
Bois de Regret
Bois de Duey
Bois de Genicourt
Bois de la Voie des Loups
Bois de Renzieres
Bois de Pontoux
Bois de St. Maurice
Forêt de Gremilly
Forêt de Hesse
Forêt de Menehould
Forêt de Monthairons
Forêt de Souilly
Wood of Hingry
Wood of Haumont
Wood of la Chaume
Wood of Fosses
Wood of Haudromont
Wood of Hardaumont
Wood of la Vauche
Wood of les Caurieres
Wood of Avocourt
Wood of Chaume
Mormont Farm
Haudromont Farm
Thiaumont Farm
Thiaumont Work
Fumin Work
Chapelle Ste. Fine
Chenois Wood
Chemin Wood
Camard Wood
Goose Crest Wood
Mort Homme
Cote de Talou
Cote du Poivre
Cote de Pandrieux
Froideterre
Fille Morte
Ft. Belle Epine
Ft. de Marre
Ft. de Bois Bourrus
Ft. Bruyeres
Ft. de Choisel
Ft. Germonville
Ft. de Chana
Ft. de la Chaume
Ft. des Sartelles
Ft. de Belrupt
Ft. de Belleville
Ft. St. Michel
Ft. de Moulainville
Ft. de Tavannes
Ft. Souville
Ft. Laufee
Ft. de Vaux
Ft. de Douaumont
Ft. de Haudainville
Ft. de Landrecourt
Ft. de Duey
Ft. de Genicourt
Ft. du Rozellier
Ft. St. Symphorien
Work on Hill 304
Work on Hill 342
Work on Hill 321
Work on Hill 320
Work on Hill 378
Work on Hill 347
Work on Hill 344
Work on Hill 295
Work on Hill 265
Work on Hill 255
Work on Hill 240
Twins of Ornes
Redoubt
Avocourt Redoubt
Redoubt de Vaux
Redoubt de Belleville
Redoubt de Moulainville
Redoubt de Thiaumont
Redoubt de Tavannes
Redoubt de Douaumont
Redoubt de Haudainville
Redoubt de Landrecourt
Redoubt de Duey
Redoubt de Genicourt
Redoubt de Rozellier
Redoubt de St. Symphorien

That evening Nivelle issued an order to his army: "The hour is decisive. The Germans, hunted down on all sides, are launching wild and furious attacks on our front, in the hope of reaching the gates of Verdun before they themselves are assailed by the united forces of the Allies. You will not let them pass, my comrades. The country demands this further supreme effort. The army of Verdun will not allow itself to be intimidated by shelling, or by the German infantry whom for four months it has beaten back. The army of Verdun will keep its fame untarnished." His confidence was not misplaced; but the last week of June saw a mad crescendo in the German assault. The situation was so grave that Pétain, while ordering resistance at all costs, had made every preparation for evacuating the right bank of the Meuse. On 24th June the enemy again got into Fleury, and the two sides faced each other in its streets. Meantime the advance from Hills 320 and 321 on the Froide Terre ridge was firmly held, and the French made some small progress towards Thiaumont. On the last day of the month, about ten in the morning, with a brilliant effort they pushed through the German barrage, regained Thiaumont fort, and held it against all counter-attacks.

The rest of the story may be briefly told. During July and August the Verdun volcano had moments of eruption, but the storm-centre had moved elsewhere. The Germans at the beginning of July were still in Fleury, and on the 11th of the month their centre delivered an attack on a 3,000 yards front from Fleury to the Chapitre Wood with the effectives of six regiments, and gained a little ground at the Chapelle St. Fine, 1,000 yards north-west of Souville. On Tuesday, 3rd August, it was the turn of the French to counter-attack. On the 5th they regained Fleury village, pushed their left well along Hill 320 to the south-east of Thiaumont, and increased the number of prisoners captured since 1st August to 1,750. This meant that the German central wedge was now flattened in. During August the fighting swayed backwards and forwards, and on 8th August the Germans were back in small parts of Thiaumont, and a day or two later again entered Fleury. From the latter place they were promptly ejected, and from Thiaumont they were ousted a few days later. The initiative was now wholly in the hands of Nivelle. Whatever the enemy won he won at great cost, and he held his gains only so long as the French cared to permit him.

The recapture of Thiaumont work on the last day of June,

the 130th day of the struggle, may be taken as the logical end of the Battle of Verdun. The fighting which followed was the back-wash of the great action, the last desperate efforts of a baffled enemy who had lost all strategic purpose, and the first forward movement of the triumphant defence. The battle had served its purpose. It had grievously depleted the manhood of France, and the thirty-nine divisions which Foch had destined for the Somme had shrunk to sixteen. But it had compelled Germany, between 21st February and 21st August, to use up fifty divisions. It had sucked in and destroyed the bulk of her free strategic reserves. It had tided over the months of waiting while France's allies were completing their preparations. The scene was about to change from the shattered Verdun uplands to the green hills of Picardy, and the main battle was on the eve of transference from the Meuse to the Somme. Even as the weary and dusty *fantassins* scrambled over the debris of Thiaumont, a hundred miles to the north-west on a broad front the infantry of France and Britain were waiting to cross their parapets.

The citadel by the Meuse had been for Germany a will-o'-the-wisp to lead her to folly and death. But as the weeks passed it became for France also a watchword, an oriflamme to which all eyes could turn, a mystic symbol of her resolution. It was a sacred place, and its wardenship was the test of her devotion. Mankind must have its shrines, and that thing for which much blood has been spilled becomes holy in its eyes. Over Verdun, as over Ypres, there will brood in history a strange *aura*, the effluence of the supreme sacrifice, the splendid resolution, the unyielding fortitude of the tens of thousands who died before her gates. Her little hills are consecrated for ever by the immortal dead.

"Heureux ceux qui sont morts sur un dernier haut lieu
Parmi tout l'appareil des grandes funérailles;
Heureux ceux qui sont morts pour les cités charnelles,
Car elles sont le corps de la cité de Dieu." *

* Charles Péguy.

CHAPTER LIX.

THE SECOND YEAR OF WAR: A RETROSPECT.

June 28, 1915–*June* 28, 1916.

Contrast of Situation at Midsummer 1915 and 1916—The Test of Military Success—Political Movements in Germany—Murder of Captain Fryatt—Economic Policy and Position of the Allies—The Neutrals—Summary of Year.

As the narrative approaches the end of the second year of war, and reaches the second anniversary of those murders at Serajevo which opened the floodgates, it is desirable to halt again and review the position. Only in this way can a campaign whose terrain was three continents and every sea, and whose battle-fronts were reckoned in thousands of miles, be seen in its full purpose and its right perspective.

At the end of June 1915 Germany's arms to a superficial observer seemed to be everywhere crowned with success. It was true that her original scheme had failed, and that she had been compelled to revise her views, and adopt a plan for which she had small liking. But with admirable patience she had performed the revision, and the new policy had won conspicuous triumphs. She held the Allies tightly in the West, held them with the minimum of men by virtue of an artillery machine to which they could not show an equal, and fortifications of a strength hitherto unknown to the world. Using her main forces in the East, she had driven Russia from post to pillar, had won back Galicia, had penetrated far into Poland, and had already in her grip the great fortresses, the loss of which meant for Russia not only a crushing loss in guns but an indefinite further retreat. She held vast tracts of enemy soil in Belgium and France, and so far these gains had not diminished. The Central Powers had a unified command, and all their strength could be applied with little delay and friction to the purpose of the German General Staff. Nor was the full tale of the Allied misfortunes yet told. Bulgaria, though the fact was

still secret, was about to enter the Teutonic League, and that must presently mean the annihilation of Serbia, and German dominion in the Balkans. Turkey had so far held the Allied advance in Gallipoli, and was soon to bring it to a melancholy standstill. There were tragedies waiting to be enacted in Mesopotamia. What had the Allies to show as against such spectacular triumphs? The conquest of one or two outlandish German colonies, a few miles gained on the Isonzo and in the Alps, the occupation of the butt-end of a Turkish peninsula, an advance up the Tigris, where the difficulties loomed greater with every league, a defensive action in Egypt, and one or two costly failures on the Western front. To the German observer it seemed a mirage as contrasted with the solid earth.

The prospect was not more pleasing when viewed with another eye than the strategist's. In the struggle of military bureaucracies against democracies, it would seem that the bureaucracies must win. Fifty years before Abraham Lincoln had said, " It has long been a grave question whether any government, not too strong for the liberties of its people, can be strong enough to maintain its existence in great emergencies." That question seemed to have been answered against the democracies. Germany and her allies looked abroad, and saw Britain still perplexed with old catchwords, still disinclined to turn a single mind to the realities of war. The air was full of captious criticism. Her people had willed the end, no doubt, but they were not wholly inclined to will the means. Again, while the Teutonic command was single and concentrated, the Allies were still fumbling and wasting their strength on divergent enterprises. There seemed to be no true General Staff work done for the Alliance as a whole. Each unit fought its own campaign, and was assisted by its colleagues only when disaster had overtaken it. Their assets, potentially very great, could not be made actual. They had more men, but those men could not be made soldiers in time. They had a great industrial machine, but that machine would not adapt itself quickly enough to military needs. They commanded the sea, but their fleets could not destroy Germany's unless Germany was willing to fight. Their blockade, while it might annoy, could not seriously cripple the energies of Central Europe, which in the greater matters was economically self-sufficing. As for *moral*, had not a bureaucracy shown that it could elicit as steely a resolution and as whole-hearted an enthusiasm as those Powers which worshipped the fetish called popular liberty?

Nevertheless an impartial critic, looking around him in June 1915, might have noted chinks in the Teutonic panoply. So far the Allied blockade had had no very serious effects; but might it not be tightened? Germany had occupied much land; but could she hold it? She was spending herself lavishly and brandishing her sword far afield in the hope of intimidating her enemies; but what if those enemies declined to be intimidated? Unless Germany achieved her end quickly, it was possible that the Allies might set their house in order. They were fighting for their national existence, and they saw no salvation save in a complete and unquestionable victory. Was it not possible that, as the urgency of the need sank into their souls, there might come such a speeding up and tightening of energies that Germany's offensive would be changed to a defensive? For the one hope of Germany lay in a successful offensive which would break up the Alliance by putting one or other of its constituent armies out of action. If this was not done speedily, could it be done at all?

Let us suppose that a man, wounded at the close of June 1915, had been shut off from the world for the space of a year. As he became convalescent he asked for news of the war. Was the Russian army still in being? and if so, in what ultimate waste, far east of Petrograd and Moscow, did it lie? for in the absence of Russian equipment the German advance could not have been stayed short of those famous cities? To his amazement he was told that Hindenburg's thrust had first weakened, and then died away, and that the winter in the East had been stagnant. More, Russia had had her breathing space, and was now advancing. All the Bukovina had been recovered, and the Volhynian Triangle, and Brussilov was well on the road to Lemberg, with three-quarters of a million Austrians out of action. In the Balkans, Serbia and Montenegro had been overrun, and Bulgaria had joined the Central Powers; but an Allied army—French, British, Serbians, Russians, and Italians—was holding the Salonika front, and waiting for the signal to advance. The Gallipoli adventure had failed, but the force had been extricated, and was now in France and Egypt and Mesopotamia. Egypt had laughed at the threat of invasion, and had easily subdued the minor ferments on her borders. On the Tigris one British fort had fallen, and a weak division had been made prisoner; but it had detained large Turkish forces, and allowed the Grand Duke Nicholas in Transcaucasia to take Erzerum, Trebizond, and Erzhingian, and to threaten the central Anatolian plain. Italy had flung back the invader from the Trentino, and

was now beginning her *revanche*. In the West there had been one great effort to pierce the German front, and after its failure the Allies had sat down to perfect their equipment and increase their armies. The convalescent heard with amazement of the tornado that had swept on Verdun, and of the stand of the thin French lines. He was told of the desperate assault then being delivered against Fleury and Thiaumont, but he was told also of the great Allied armies mustered on the Somme for the counter-stroke. Above all, he heard of the miraculous work of Britain, of ample munitions, of seventy divisions in the field, and great reserves behind them. He heard, too, of a growing unity in strategical and economic purpose among the Allies, of attacks conceived and directed with a single aim. As the manifold of these facts slowly shaped itself in his consciousness, he realized that he had awakened to a different world. The Allies had passed from the defensive to the offensive.

What is the test of military success? The question has often been asked, and the popular replies are innumerable; but the soldier knows only one answer. The test is the destruction of the enemy's power of resistance, and that power depends upon his possession of an adequate field army. Success is not the occupation of territory, or of successive enemy lines, or of famous enemy fortresses. These things may be means, but they are not in themselves the end. And if these things are won without the end being neared, the winner of them has not only not advanced, he has gone backward, since he has expended great forces for an idle purpose, and is thereby crippled for future efforts. Early in 1916, when the German press was exulting in the study of the map of Europe, Hindenburg was said to have described Germany's military position as "brilliant, but without a future." If the veteran field-marshal was correctly reported, he showed in the remark an acumen which observers would not necessarily have deduced from his exploits in the field.

Strategically, in the strict sense of that word, Germany had long ago failed. Her original purpose was sound—to destroy one by one the Allied field armies. Her urgent need was a speedy and final victory. The Marne and First Ypres deprived her of this hope, and she never regained it. The Allies took the strategical offensive, and, by pinning her to her lines and drawing round her the net of their blockade, compelled her to a defensive war. In the largest sense the Allied offensive dated from the beginning of 1915. But it was an offensive which did not include the tactical

initiative. So long as the Allies were deficient in equipment Germany was able to take the tactical offensive. Instances were the Second Battle of Ypres and the great German advance in the East—movements which were undertaken largely in the hope that tactical success might gradually restore the strategic balance. This hope was doomed to disappointment. Victories, indeed, were won, brilliant victories, but they led nowhere. By-and-by came the last attempts, the onslaughts on Verdun and the Trentino; and the failure of these prepared the way for the Allies themselves to take the tactical initiative. Germany was tactically as well as strategically on her defence. Now the essence of German tactics was their reliance upon guns. For them artillery was the primary and infantry the secondary arm. They looked to win battles at long range, confident in an elaborate machine to which their opponents could provide no equivalent. The calculation miscarried; but at the beginning of the war there was some ground for their confidence. To improvise an equivalent machine might reasonably have been considered beyond the power of France and Russia. But three things combined to frustrate the hope—the stubborn fight against odds of all the Allies, their command of the sea which allowed them to import munitions till their own producing power had developed, and the industrial capacity of Britain which enabled her to manufacture for the whole Alliance. Faced with an artillery equipment of equal strength, the German tactics were ineffective; and when the day came that the Allies had a stronger munitionment than their enemy, they were both futile and perilous. The Battle of Verdun may be taken as the final proof of their breakdown. They were intrinsically wrong; they could only have succeeded if the whirlwind fury of the first German assault had immediately achieved its object; and, so soon as Germany was reduced to a strategical defensive, they became a signal danger.

The miscalculation of Germany at this stage did not lie only with the General Staff, but with all the German authorities, civil, naval, and military, and with the German people. Since she was clearly on the defence, it would have been well to take the measures proper to a defensive campaign. She was holding far-flung lines with too few men, and the path of wisdom was obviously to shorten them. But in the then state of German opinion it was impracticable. When the people had been buoyed up with hope of a triumphant peace and a vast increase of territory, when the fanatics of Pan-Germanism were publishing details of

how they intended to use the conquered areas, when the Imperial Chancellor was lyrically apostrophizing the map, a shortening of the lines in East and West would have tumbled down the whole edifice of German confidence. She could not do it; her political commitments were too deep; her earlier vainglory sat like an Old Man of the Sea on her shoulders. Yet beyond doubt it was her best chance. Had she, before the Allied offensive began, drawn in her front to the Vistula and the Meuse, she would have had an immensely strong line, and adequate numbers wherewith to hold it. She would have offered the Allies the prospect of an interminable war, under conditions which they had fondly hoped they had made impossible. Her one chance was to weaken the Alliance internally, to weary this or that Power, to lengthen out the contest to a point where the cost in money and lives would induce a general nervelessness and satiety. Moreover, by shortening her lines her food problem would have become far less urgent, and the deadliness of the blockade would have been lessened. But she let the moment for the heroic course slip by, and when the first guns opened in the combined Allied advance that course had become for ever impossible.

The position at sea in midsummer 1916 had not in substance changed from that of the preceding year. The waterways of the world were still denied by the Allies to the enemy, and used by them for their own military purposes. There had been several bursts of submarine violence, already chronicled in these pages, but it is fair to say that the submarine as a serious weapon had during the year decreased in importance. Its brutality was enhanced, but its efficiency had declined. Its moral effect in the way of shaking the nerves of British merchant seamen was *nil*. The result of the year's experience had been to induce a high degree of popular confidence in the measures taken to meet the under-water danger—a confidence not wholly justified, and, as we shall see, soon to be rudely shaken. One great incident had broken the monotony of the maritime vigil. The German High Sea Fleet had been brought to action, and in the battle of 31st May off the Jutland coast had been driven back to harbour. But that great sea-fight did not change the situation; it only confirmed it. "Before Jutland, as after it," in Mr. Balfour's words, "the German fleet was imprisoned; the battle was an attempt to break the bars and burst the confining gates; it failed, and with its failure the High Sea Fleet sank again into impotence."

The British navy, viewing the position while they swept the

North Sea and the bells rang in Berlin and Hamburg to celebrate Scheer's return, were convinced that they would see the enemy again. They had reason for a view which facts were nevertheless to refute. The Battle of Jutland was fought because politics demanded that the German fleet should do something to justify its existence in the eyes of the German people. That demand must be repeated. As the skies darkened over Germany it seemed certain that Scheer would make further efforts, and the nearer came the day of final defeat the more desperate those efforts would be. For the navy of a Power is like a politician who changes sides: it counts two on a division. If the Power is conquered, its fleet will be the spoil of the conqueror. Far better that the German battleships should go to the bottom, with a number of British ships to keep them company, than that they should be doled out ignobly to increase the strength of the Allied victors.

While Germany's military and naval situation had a certain clearness, it was far otherwise with her domestic affairs. If differences of opinion were rumoured within her General Staff, there were open and flagrant antagonisms among her civilian statesmen. Two main streams of opinion had long been apparent. One was that held by the Emperor, by the Imperial Chancellor, and by the bulk of the civilian ministers. They believed—with occasional lapses into optimism—that the contest must end in a stalemate, and they were willing to abate their first arrogance and play for safety. Above all, they were anxious to avoid any conflict with the more powerful neutrals, for they knew that only by neutral help could Germany set her shattered house in order. They still talked boldly about victory, but these utterances were partly a concession to popular taste, and partly a desire to put their case high in order to enhance the value of future concessions. These people were the *politiques*, and they were not agreed on the details of their policy, some looking towards a *rapprochement* with France or Britain, others seeing in Russia a prospective ally. But they differed from their opponents in being willing to bargain and concede, and in allowing prudential considerations to temper the old German pride.

Arrayed against them were the fanatics of Pan-Germanism of the Reventlow-Tirpitz school, who still clung to the belief in a complete victory, and were prepared to defy the whole round earth. To this school Prince Bülow had by a curious metamorphosis become attached. Neck or nothing was their maxim. They were advocates of every extreme of barbarism in method, and refused

to contemplate any result of the war except one in which Germany should dictate to beaten foes. They had a considerable following, including the bulk of the naval and military staffs, and they used the name of Hindenburg as their rallying-cry, because he loomed big in the popular imagination as the strong, imperturbable soldier.

We can trace the strife of these two schools through German speeches and writings till the late spring of 1916. And then something happened which convinced both that their forecasts were wrong—which took from the *politiques* their hope of bargaining, and from the fanatics their certainty of triumph. Suddenly, with one of those queer illuminations which happen now and then to the most self-satisfied, the masters of Germany realized that their case was growing desperate. They saw that the Allied command was now in the way to be unified, and that the Allied efforts were about to be quadrupled. They saw that the Allies would accept no terms but unconditional surrender. And they saw, moreover, that the contest could not end with the war, for their enemies were preparing a conjoint economic policy which would ensure that their gains in battle should not be lost in peace. They saw at the same time that their military position was losing its brilliance, and had even less future than when Hindenburg coined his epigram. The alternative now was not between a complete victory and an honourable draw, but between victory and annihilation—*Weltmacht oder Niedergang*.

This sudden realization induced a new temper. The people had been deluded, but there must some day be a stern awakening. Let that awakening come from the enemy, was the decision of the German High Command. The nation must learn that their foes would not stop short of their utter destruction, the ruin not only of Germany's imperial dream, but of that laborious industrial and economic system which brought grist to the humblest mill. The boldest course was the safest. Concessions to humanity brought no reward, so let rigour rule unchecked. It was only on the grim resolution of the whole nation that they could count for the life-and-death struggle before them, and the nation must be brought to this desperate temper by the proof that their leaders possessed it. The following of the *politiques* shrank in number, and the voice of discretion was hushed. Germany proceeded accordingly to burn her boats.

The first evidence of this calculated insanity was the murder of Captain Fryatt. Early in June 1916 the Great Eastern steamer

Brussels, plying between Harwich and Holland, was captured in the North Sea by a German torpedo boat and taken to Zeebrugge. Captain Fryatt was imprisoned at Bruges, and brought to trial as a *franc-tireur*, on the ground that in an encounter with a German submarine on March 28, 1915, he had defended himself by trying to ram his enemy, and had compelled her to dive. He was condemned to death on Thursday, 27th July, and shot that evening. The German press, instructed for the purpose, broke into a chorus of approval. "The necessity," wrote the *Cologne Gazette*, "of protecting honourable and chivalrous combatants against perfidious and murderous attacks compels the military command to visit all illegal attacks with the strongest punishment. The captain who beneath a harmless mask flashes a dagger on an unsuspecting person is a bandit." The incident roused in the people of Britain a cold fury similar to that which followed the murder of Miss Cavell. The Prime Minister in the House of Commons gave renewed warning that it would be the first business of the Allies, when the proper season arrived, to punish such crimes; that the criminals would be brought to justice, whatever their station; and that the man who authorized the system which permitted such deeds might well be held the most guilty of all. About the same time the German military authorities in north-eastern France organized a general shifting of sections of the population. In the neighbourhoods of Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing, women, young and old, were moved wholesale to other districts, where they were compelled to work at the dictation of their masters. The transference and the coercion which followed were attended with much revolting inhumanity.

Germany in both cases put forth in defence of her conduct a number of contradictory pleas. Captain Fryatt had not been defending himself, she said; he had been attacking. In any case resistance on the part of a civilian was a violation of the laws of war. The French deportations were justified on the ground of the *force majeure* of necessity. They were a deliberate breach of Germany's own undertakings at the Hague, but she argued that she must do the best for herself in a life-and-death struggle. The legal arguments on the first case need not delay us; there were none on the second. It is an old rule of war among civilized peoples that a merchant vessel may lawfully defend herself against an enemy attempt at her capture or destruction. This rule became more reasonable than ever when German submarines were scouting the seas with instructions to torpedo British merchantmen at sight. It had been laid down by Lord Stowell and Chief Justice Marshall;

it had been embodied in the naval codes of most countries; it had been approved by the chief German jurists; it had even appeared in the German Naval Prize Regulations, which were in effect at the time when Captain Fryatt was alleged to have tried to ram the submarine. Germany, it is true, had shown herself restless under that doctrine before the war, and had made various attempts to have it set aside; and since August 1914 she had simply disregarded it, as she had disregarded all other bonds which checked her freedom. The captain of a trawler who tried to ram a submarine which was endeavouring to sink him, the householder who fired a rifle at a Zeppelin which was engaged in destroying his township, the peasant who carried a pistol to protect his family from the last outrage, were all alike, under this curious creed, bandits and murderers.

It is idle to discuss the question on legal grounds, for Germany had none which serious men could consider. But, if we neglect the sphere of legality, there would still seem to remain certain fetters to unbridled license imposed by elementary human decency. Even these Germany now spurned, as she had spurned them before in the horrors of her first invasion of France and Belgium. Had the affair not been so tragic, there would have been comedy in the unplumbed childishness of a Power which still worshipped the leaden idols, the creation of her own vanity, when the earth was cracking beneath her feet. If the German leaders desired to impress upon the nation the implacableness of their foes, then they assuredly succeeded. In France and Britain the desire to wage the war *à outrance* was blown to a white heat of resolution. It found expression in the words of the Allied statesmen, and it was soon to find a more deadly expression in the deeds of the Allied armies.

At the end of June the economic situation of the Central Powers was becoming serious. The immediate food stringency was the least part of it. That stringency was already great, and till the harvest could be reaped in August it would continue to increase. A Director of Food Supplies was appointed; but no rationing and no ingenious manipulation of stocks could add to an aggregate which was too small for the comfort of the people. The British blockade had been greatly tightened, and every day saw its effectiveness growing. In June the unfortunate Declaration of London had been totally and finally abandoned. However good the German harvest, it could not make up all the deficit, and its results would cease early in 1917; nor could it supply the animal fats, the lubricating oils, and the many foreign necessaries which the British

navy had forbidden. As for finance, further loans might be raised on the security of the Jutland " victory," though such loans were at the mercy of some sudden popular understanding of the true position. But the darkest part of the picture was the situation which must face Germany after war, assuming that a crushing victory was beyond her. Her great commercial expansion had been largely due to the system of favourable treaties which under Caprivi and Bülow she had negotiated with foreign countries. Even before the war it was clear that the signatory nations would seek to recover their freedom, and a tariff struggle was in prospect at the end of 1916 when the treaties were liable to denunciation. Now not only was there no hope of their renewal on good terms, but there was the likelihood that all the Allies after the war would unite in boycotting Germany and developing commercial relations between themselves. At a Conference held in Paris in the middle of June 1916 it was agreed that in the reconstruction period the enemy Powers should be denied " most-favoured-nation " treatment, that enemy subjects should be prevented from engaging in vital industries in Allied countries, and that provision should be made for the conservation and exchange of the Allied natural resources. It was further resolved to render the Allied countries independent of the enemy countries in raw materials and essential manufactured articles. Unless Germany won the power to dictate treaties to her foes, as she had dictated to France in 1871, it looked as if the self-sufficiency of which she had boasted would be all that was left to her.

How nervous was Germany's temper on this subject was shown by the popular joy which greeted the voyage of a German submarine to America, and its safe return. On 9th July the U boat *Deutschland* arrived at Baltimore from Bremen with 280 tons of cargo, mostly dye-stuffs, and an autograph letter from the Emperor. She had sailed under a commercial flag, and, being held by the American authorities to be technically a merchantman, was allowed to leave, and returned safely to Germany. It was a bold performance, and no one grudged the crew and captain their meed of honour; but the voyage involved no naval difficulty, its commercial results were infinitesimal, and the popular joy in Germany was based upon the erroneous idea that a means had been found of meeting the British blockade. She hoped that she had re-established trading relations with the chief neutral Power. It was a vain whimsy; there was nothing which the British navy more desired than that a hundred *Deutschlands* would attempt to repeat

the enterprise. A submarine or two in the vast expanse of the Atlantic might escape detection, but a submarine service would be gently and steadily drawn into their net.

The one hope for Germany—and it was slender at the best—was that dissension would creep into the Allied councils. She could not look to draw any one of her foes to her side, but she might weaken their affection for each other, and so lessen their united striking power. She used her press and her connections in neutral countries to play the part of the sower of tares in the Allies' vineyard. France was praised for her gallant exploits, and was advised not to count on the alliance of perfidious Britain. It was hinted that the Channel ports would never be restored to her; that Normandy had once been joined to England, and that history might repeat itself. What, it was asked, had become of the British during the long Verdun struggle? The overgrown improvised armies of Britain were simply mobs, too untrained to influence the war. The legend of Britain's commercial ambitions was zealously preached. Russia was warned that after the war she would soon pray to be delivered from her friends. This game was destined to fail for two reasons. It was most blunderingly played, for German diplomacy was a clumsy thing, and her back-stairs efforts were betrayed by the tramping of her heavy feet. Again she underrated the depth and gravity of the Allied purpose, which was faced with far too desperate an issue to have time for pettishness and vanity. There was rivalry, indeed, between the Allies, but it was an emulation in gallantry and sacrifice.

When we turn to the position of Germany's opponents, we find by midsummer 1916 that in every respect the year had shown a change for the better. Britain had enormously increased her levies, and had provided the machinery for utilizing her total man-power. France, though she had suffered a terrible drain at Verdun, had all her armies in being, and, with the assistance of Britain, who had taken over a large part of the front, would be able to supply the necessary drafts for a considerable time. Russia had trained huge numbers of her new recruits, and was stronger in men than before her great retreat began. In munitionment the change was amazing. France was amply provided for, Russia had at least four times greater a supply than she had ever known, and Britain, though still far from the high-water mark of her effort, had performed the miraculous. In a speech in the House of Commons, Mr. Montagu, who had succeeded Mr. Lloyd George

as Minister of Munitions, drew a contrast between the situation in June 1915 and June 1916. The report of the work of the department read like a fairy tale. In shells the output, which in 1914–15 it took twelve months to produce, could now be supplied from home sources in the following times: field-gun ammunition, 3 weeks; field-howitzer ammunition, 2 weeks; medium shells, 11 days; heavy shells, 4 days. Britain was now manufacturing and issuing to the Western front weekly as much as the whole pre-war stock of land-service ammunition in the country. In heavy guns the output in the year had increased sixfold, and would soon be doubled. The weekly production of machine guns had increased fourteenfold, and of rifles threefold—wholly from home sources. In small-arm ammunition the output was three times as great, and large reserve stocks were being accumulated. The production of high explosives was 66 times what it had been in the beginning of 1915, and the supply of bombs for trench warfare had been multiplied by 33. These figures were for British use alone, but we were also making colossal contributions to the common stock. One-third of the total British manufactures of shell steel went to France, and 20 per cent. of our production of machine tools we sent to our Allies. Such a record was a triumph for the British workman, who in his long hours in dingy factories was doing as vital service to his country as his brothers in the trenches of France and Salonika, on the sands of Mesopotamia and Egypt, or on the restless waters of the North Sea.

The economic heart of the Alliance was Britain, and on her financial stability depended its powers of endurance till victory. We have seen in earlier chapters how complex was her problem. All the Allies had to make vast purchases abroad, and these had to be supported by British credit. The foreign exporter had to be paid for his goods in the currency which he would accept, and Britain had to find large quantities of gold or marketable securities for her daily purchases. So far as internal finance was concerned, her position was sound. In a speech in the House of Commons on 10th August, the Chancellor of the Exchequer calculated that by March 31, 1917, if the war lasted so long, our total indebtedness would almost equal the national income, "a burden by no means intolerable to contemplate," and that our national indebtedness would be less than one-sixth of the total national wealth. But the question of foreign payments—something between one and two millions a day—remained an anxious one, and was yet far from a settlement. In some respects the situation had improved.

Owing to the policy of restriction of imports, and owing also to a remarkable increase in British exports—11½ millions higher for July 1916 than for the same month in the previous year—our adverse trade balance was being reduced. In July 1916, for example, it was 22½ millions as against 31½ millions for July 1915. But ahead of our statesmen loomed the old difficulty: we were paying for American imports for ourselves and our Allies mainly out of "dollar securities"—those American bonds which British owners had lent or sold to the Treasury. At the present rate we should have exhausted this form of currency before midsummer 1917, and we might then be faced with a real crisis. It was urged with great reason that it would be well to adopt at once some drastic method of reducing unnecessary imports, and so lessening foreign payments, if we did not wish to find our military effort crippled at the moment when it should have been gathering power for the *coup de grâce*.

Economy in this respect could only be effected by the Allies jointly, since British credit had to cover all purchases; and it was now made possible by the unification which we have seen in progress in the Allied staff work. The pooling of resources was in theory complete. Frequent conferences, economic, political, and strategic, seemed to give assurance that every atom of strength would be directed to a single end. The whole Allied force now held one great battle-front—from Riga to the Bukovina; then, after a gap, from the Gulf of Orfano to west of the Vardar; then from the Isonzo to the Stelvio Pass; and, lastly, from Belfort to the North Sea. The Russians were the right wing, the Salonika army the right centre, the Italians the centre, the French the left centre, and the British the left wing. The military Conference in Paris in May 1916 had for the first time prepared for the whole front one common strategic plan. The Central Powers, who had won what they had won by their superior unity, seemed to be now confronted with an Alliance no longer loose and divergent, but disciplined and directed. This sense of energy better guided induced in all the Allied peoples a new confidence and peace of mind. France, keyed to a high pitch by her marvellous deeds at Verdun, was in no mind to criticize her colleagues, and still less to find fault with her leaders. In Britain the mist of suspicion grew thinner between the Government and the people. Critics forsook their quest for a man of destiny, and were content to help fallible statesmen to make the best of things. In Russia the popular temper was fired by the great sweep of Brussilov and his armies,

though the first sun of success seemed to be about to wake into activity the host of parasites which preyed upon her, and which had been driven to hibernate during the chill winter of the long retreat. It was the dawn of the Allied offensive, which, if conducted with resolution, seemed to make victory mathematically certain during the coming year. But these calculations were based on the hypothesis that the world would remain substantially as it was in 1914, and that no new factor would enter into the problem. A freak of fortune might still give the enemy a fresh lease of life, and alter the whole character of the war.

The position of neutrals had in certain respects changed materially during the past year. Bulgaria had entered the war on the side of the Central Powers. The British blockade had revolutionized the oversea commerce of those Powers which still stood aloof from the contest. No neutral save Portugal had joined the Alliance; but, so far as could be judged, no other neutral was likely to join the enemy. Rumania was still waiting with a single eye to her own territorial interests, but every mile that Brussilov advanced in the north increased the chances of her intervention on the Allied side. Greece had attempted to play the same game, but in each move had shown a singular folly. Bulgaria's invasion of her territory had roused a national feeling which the Court and Army chiefs, blinded by the spell of Germany, could neither understand nor in the long run control. M. Venizelos, the leader of Greek nationalism, bided his time, and watched, with shame and melancholy, as did all well-wishers of Hellas, the huckstering policy of the Athens Government. The *Græculus esuriens* was not dead. Still, as of old, he tended to be too clever, and, from his absorption in petty cunning, to wreck the greater matters of his own self-interest. Spain remained aloof from the struggle, her hierarchy and the bulk of her upper classes leaning in sympathy towards Germany, and the mass of her people favouring the Allies. Holland and the Scandinavian states preserved a strict neutrality, and, as the German star grew dimmer, Sweden found less to admire in her trans-Baltic neighbour. On these states, who were in close proximity to Germany, the restrictions of the British blockade bore very hard. On the whole they faced the difficulties with good temper and good sense, and their collaboration in the "rationing" system was of inestimable advantage to the Allies. Switzerland had, perhaps, the hardest fate of all. The war had greatly impoverished her, and the two widely different strains in her population kept her sympathies divided between the belligerents. To

her eternal honour she played a diligent and kindly part in facilitating the exchange of prisoners on both sides, and in giving hospitality in her mountain health resorts to the badly wounded. The country which had originated the Red Cross service was faithful to her high tradition in the works of mercy.

The attitude of the United States had not altered since we last reviewed it. Her triumph over Germany on the submarine question—real in principle but trivial in results—gave to Mr. Wilson's Government a stock of credit in foreign policy which carried them through the summer. America's interest was presently absorbed by her coming Presidential election, when Mr. Wilson was to be opposed from the Republican side by Mr. Hughes, assisted by Mr. Roosevelt and the Progressives. This meant that foreign affairs would be considered mainly from the electioneering standpoint. Neither side wished to alienate the German electors, both sides wished to appear as the champions of American interests, and at the same time Mr. Wilson, whose trump card was that he had kept America out of the war, was unwilling to embroil himself with either the Central Powers or the Allies. The British blockade had made some kind of "Black List" necessary, in order to penalize neutral firms that were found trading with the enemy. This step naturally roused great discontent in America; much strong language was used, and the President was given drastic powers of retaliation. But, till the elections were over, relations with the United States had a certain unreality. Her statesmen were bound to speak and act with one eye on the facts and the other on the hustings.

The year had not brought to light any new great figure in politics or war. "This is a war of small men," Herr Zimmermann had observed early in the struggle, and the phrase was true in the main of all the belligerents. Mackensen was probably the best fighting general in the highest command that Germany possessed, and in Falkenhayn and Ludendorff she had two conspicuously able staff officers. Hindenburg was coming to be generally recognized as one of those favourites of fortune who acquire popular repute beyond their deserts. He was a grim and impressive figure, and he could strike a hammer-blow, but in professional skill he ranked below more than one of his colleagues. On the Allied side one reputation had been greatly enhanced. Alexeiev, the Russian Chief of Staff, had shown in the retreat a military genius which it was hard to overpraise. No less remarkable was his judgment

during the long winter stagnation, and his power to seize the psychological moment when the hour for the offensive struck. Of the other Russian generals, Yudenitch in Transcaucasia and Brussilov in Galicia had increased their fame. In the West a new fighting man had revealed himself in Pétain, whose discretion was as great as his resolution and fiery energy.

In civil statesmanship the French Premier, M. Briand, had shown qualities which made him an admirable leader of his nation in such a crisis. His assiduity and passion, his power of conciliation, his personal magnetism, and his great gift of speech enabled him to interpret France to the world and to herself. In Britain the death of Lord Kitchener had removed the supreme popular figure of the war—the man who played for the British Empire the part of Joffre among the French people. He was succeeded at the War Office by Mr. Lloyd George, the only British statesman who possessed anything like the same power of impressing the popular imagination. The year had brought one notable discovery. Lord Robert Cecil, the Minister of Blockade, had perhaps the most difficult department in the Government, and in it he revealed much of the patience and coolness, the soundness of judgment, and the capacity for the larger view which had characterized his father. He now ranked among the foremost of those ministers whose reputation was not measured by parliamentary dialectic or adroitness in party management, but by administrative efficiency and the essentials of statesmanship.

But at this stage to look only at prominent figures was to misread the picture. It was a war of peoples, and the peoples were everywhere greater than their leaders. The battles were largely soldiers' battles, and the civilian effort depended mainly upon the individual work of ordinary folk whose names were unknown to the press. Everywhere in Britain, France, and Italy there was a vast amount of honest efficiency, and on this hung the fortunes of the Allies. Many of the ablest business and professional men were now enlisted in the service of the State. It was the work of the middle-class German in production and administration, far more than that of Falkenhayn or Helfferich, that kept Germany going, and it was the labour of the same classes among the Allies that enabled them in time to excel the German machine.

CHAPTER LX.

AFFAIRS IN THE NEAR AND MIDDLE EAST.

April 18–*August* 25, 1916.

Capture of Erzhingian—Condition of Persia—Baratov joins Hands with British on the Tigris—Germany and Islam—Revolt of the Grand Sherif of Mecca—The Action at Romani—The Policy of Greece—Surrender of Fort Rupel—Partial Allied Blockade—The Bulgarian Armies attack.

(*Maps*, pp. 488, 274.)

I.

During the summer of 1916 the Near and Middle East had lost the position which they had held for a little as the centre of interest in the world-war. While the tides of battle were flowing strongly in Poland and Galicia, in the Trentino and on the Somme, the Transcaucasian, Mesopotamian, and Egyptian theatres—nay, even the Balkan area—tended to be forgotten. But if they lacked the strategic importance which they held a year before, they were none the less the scene of much desperate and intricate fighting. For Turkey remained the incalculable and unknown quantity in the strife of the two alliances. Her position dominated alike the Balkan and South Russian battle-grounds, and in her direction Germany looked mainly for those rewards which she was determined at all costs to extract from the struggle.

Constantinople during the summer again changed its character. Its people seemed to have lost heart in their manifold sufferings, and whereas in the spring it would have been dangerous for German troops to parade in its streets, by July only German and Austrian soldiers were visible, since the Turkish infantry had gone east and west to the firing line. The Christian troops of the Ottoman Empire, whom the authorities distrusted, were busy fortifying the European side of the Bosphorus, and erecting defences at Angora and Konieh. The city was congested with thousands of starving refugees. Business was everywhere at a standstill, and the steps taken by the Turkish Government to regulate commerce were

probably the most perverse and whimsical economic measures ever adopted by a modern state. Towards the end of July the strain was slightly eased by the arrival of the new harvest from central Anatolia, as well as by the receipt of food supplies from Rumania. But in the provinces things were no better. In Syria especially starvation stalked at large through the land. Germany filled the place with her engineers and surveyors, and strained every nerve to complete the gaps in the Bagdad line; she made some slight efforts, in her own interest, to fight the cholera which was appearing among the Turkish troops; but for the rest she plundered the country wholesale, and had no eye for anything but her military purpose. Her emissary, well fed and well doctored, made his camp everywhere from the Marmora to Jerusalem, and worked at his railways and reservoirs; while the wretched country-folk, dully resentful of an invasion which they did not comprehend, were dying in thousands at his gates.

The fall of Trebizond on the 18th of April left the way open for the advance of the Grand Duke Nicholas through the last ramparts of that mountain land which defended the cornlands of Sivas. The position of Yudenitch was precarious. His wings were thrown out well ahead of his centre. His right was beyond Trebizond; his left, having occupied Mush and Bitlis, was moving on Diarbekr; while his centre was still fighting its way through the narrow hill glens towards Baiburt and Erzhingian. At this moment the new strength of the Turks had not yet been tried on their opponents. Trebizond had fallen to the efforts of an isolated wing, and it was certain that the troops brought from Gallipoli and those released by the British failure at Kut would make a desperate effort to hold up the Russian advance along the central highroads which led to the Anatolian granary.

By the end of May the Russian front was close on Baiburt, on the Trebizond road, and had occupied Mamakhatun, half-way between Erzerum and Erzhingian. On the last day of the month a strong Turkish offensive developed in the Baiburt region and on the Erzhingian road, with the result that in the latter area the Russians were forced to evacuate Mamakhatun after destroying the bridge. For a month there was a lull in the fighting, and then on 12th July Yudenitch's centre again advanced, and recaptured Mamakhatun, taking nearly two thousand prisoners. Three days later his right centre took the important town of Baiburt, and his left wing drove the enemy from his position south-west of Mush. Yudenitch pressed on, and by the morning of the 25th was within

ten miles of Erzhingian itself. That evening the Russian cavalry occupied the fortress—the most important gain in this theatre since the fall of Trebizond. The ancient Armenian town was the headquarters of the 4th Turkish Corps, and had been the advanced base of the enemy in the campaign since the loss of Erzerum. It was on the edge of the hill country, and was therefore the last outpost of the Turkish defence in front of the central Anatolian valleys.

The enemy replied with a vigorous diversion against the Russian left wing. It began in the early days of August, a fortnight after the fall of Erzhingian, at a time when Yudenitch's main forces were on his centre, and his left wing from Lake Van to Mush and Bitlis was lightly held. From his base at Diarbekr the enemy thrust northward against Mush and Bitlis, took the towns, and forced the Russians some thirty miles back to a point not quite fifty miles from Erzerum itself. The danger of the attack was that Erzhingian was a hundred miles distant, separated by wild mountains with few communications, and there was a risk that, before reserves could be brought up to the threatened flank, the enemy might win his way to the east of Erzerum, cut the Russian front in two, and drive the halves apart towards the Black Sea and Lake Van. At the same time the extreme Turkish right, comprising the 4th Division, supported by troops from Mush, struck east of Lake Van in the direction of Rayat. The Russian reply came on 18th August, being directed from south of Lake Urmiah against Rayat, and from west of Lake Van against Mush and Bitlis. It reached its head on the 25th, when, near Rayat, the 4th Turkish Division was utterly dispersed. Bitlis had already been taken, and that same evening Mush was recaptured. The danger to Erzerum had now gone, the Russian front was reconstituted, and Yudenitch resumed his slow movement westward between the Black Sea and the Tigris watershed.

Meantime in western Persia a curious campaign had been going on during the summer months. In December 1915 a Russian force under General Baratov had entered the country from the north, and had driven the mixed levies of Turks, gendarmerie, and Persian insurgents west through the passes which bordered Mesopotamia. During the early months of 1916 this force, scarcely more than an infantry division in strength, supported by cavalry, had a series of considerable successes. Hamadan was theirs in January, and when Turkish supports arrived from Bagdad and concentrated in the Kermanshah region, Baratov smote them heavily, and drove them back through the mountain passes. For three months the

bold enterprise prospered well. The Persian loyalists raised their heads, and the rebels lost adherents daily. Sir Percy Sykes arrived at Bundar Abbas in March, and proceeded to organize a military police for southern Persia, to rid the country of German and Turkish bands and the rebel gendarmerie. On 12th March Baratov occupied Karind, fifty miles west of Kermanshah, and some sixty-four miles from the Turkish frontier at Khanikin. By 6th May he was thirty miles nearer Khanikin. By 15th May he reached the frontier, and was less than 120 miles from Bagdad ; while 160 miles farther north another force, which may be regarded as an extension of Yudenitch's left wing, captured Rowanduz, some eighty miles east of Mosul. Unfortunately, this speed could not be maintained. Baratov's southern force had long and precarious communications behind it, and was out of touch with the main army of the Grand Duke Nicholas. Even at Kermanshah it was a full 250 miles from its base at Kasvin. Its bold sally towards the Tigris valley came too late to turn the tide at Kut, and it all but led to its own undoing. For early in June Turkey sent reinforcements to the Persian border, and Baratov was steadily driven back. His retreat was as gallant and skilful as his advance. He fell back from Khanikin, and then from Kermanshah, then across the passes, and finally from Hamadan itself. The fires of revolt once more flamed up throughout Persia, wavering tribesmen went over to the rebel side, and the position of the Shah and his ministers and the various British officers grew daily more difficult. Russia had flown, after her generous fashion, to the relief of her ally, and was paying the price of her devotion to the common cause.

But before the dark days fell a bold adventure brought a breath of romance into the tale. A sotnia of Baratov's Cossacks succeeded in joining hands with the British on the Tigris. The incident had little military significance, but it was an exploit requiring supreme audacity and skill. On the night of 8th May the squadron, consisting of five officers and 110 troopers, left Mahidasht, twenty miles west by south of Kermanshah. They rode south through the wild Pusht-i-Kuh hills, crossing passes some of them 8,000 feet high, where the snow still lay deep. They started with three days' rations, and when these were finished depended on local supplies. So swift was their ride that they met with no opposition except stray shots at long range. The distance to be covered was 180 miles, and they travelled at the rate of twenty-four miles a day, halting for two and a half days at the court of the Wali of Pusht-i-Kuh. After nightfall on 18th May they reached the British camp

at Ali Gharbi, on the Tigris, and were warmly welcomed by our men. The tough horsemen, though their last stage had been thirty miles long, spent the evening with song and dance, and declined to go to bed till the small hours.

The day after the arrival of the Cossacks Gorringe's force made an important advance. On 19th May the Turks evacuated their position at Beit Eissa, on the right bank of the river, a little in rear of the Sanna-i-yat line, on the left bank. Following up the enemy, Gorringe carried the Dujailah redoubt, the key of the Es Sinn position, which Aylmer had assailed in vain on 8th March. Next day the whole of the southern bank of the Tigris was cleared as far as the Shatt-el-Hai, and from the south we were facing Kut, though the other bank was still held by the Turks as far as Sanna-i-yat. The advance, had it been possible a month before, would have led to Townshend's relief, but now it had no fruitful consequences. Our troops were weary, and suffered much from a temperature which was never less than 100 degrees in the shade. Moreover, the floods were out, and would continue well into July. The summer campaign in Mesopotamia resolved itself into a dull and arduous watching of the enemy. But if military operations in the strict sense were thus suspended, a vast deal of work was done by Sir Percy Lake in preparing for the next cold-weather campaign. Two new railways were under construction, the shallows of the river were dredged, and at Basra wharves were completed where ocean-going steamers could unload. Embankments were built to protect the main camping-grounds at the advanced base against floods. Huts were erected on a large scale, and hospital accommodation was enormously increased. In January 1916 there had been only 4,700 beds, in May there were over 9,000, and in July nearly 16,000. In August Sir Percy Lake relinquished the chief command in Mesopotamia to Lieutenant-General F. S. Maude.

II.

The beaver-like activity of German engineers on the Bagdad and Syrian railways, and the accumulation of stores at various points from Alexandretta to Beersheba, presaged still another effort against Egypt and the Suez Canal. The Committee, and still more its German masters, had never lost the hope of striking at Britain in that vital part, and their ardour grew as the chances of success diminished. The stagnation in Mesopotamia and at Salonika in the early summer enabled certain reserves to be freed for the enter-

prise, and Germany supervised the preparation of material. For the crossing of the canal and for water transport reliance was no longer to be placed on floats of kerosene tins. Great tanks and pontoons were brought from Germany by the Bagdad railway, and carted over the gap in the line through the Amanus mountains. The British commander in Egypt was fully alive to this activity and its meaning, and waited with confidence on the issue. The period of waiting was beguiled by a brilliant exploit of our airplanes against the big Turkish aerodrome five miles south of El Arish. On 19th June eleven machines crossed the hundred miles of desert, and bombed the ten hangars. Two were set on fire and wholly destroyed, four others were hit repeatedly, and at least five enemy airplanes were put out of action. Besides the aerodrome, enemy camps and troops were attacked with bombs and machine-gun fire. Preparation was steadily going on for that advance beyond the desert which was the true defensive policy for Egypt.

Meantime an event had occurred of profound significance for the future of the Moslem world. Arabia had never been truly conquered by the Turks. It had remained the stronghold of the aristocracy of the faith, and had at the best only tolerated the Turkish guardianship of the Holy Places, since Turkey was the chief Mahommedan state, and had still the prestige of the conquering days of Islam. But many movements, inspired by a desire to return to the old ways, had risen like dust storms amid the sands of the desert. More than a century ago the Wahabis had driven the Turks from the Holy Places, from all Arabia, and even from Kerbela, the Mesopotamian city which holds the tomb of Hussein, and is the object of pilgrimage to pious Shiahs. In 1872 the Turks attempted the conquest of Yemen, but failed, and in those parts the writ of the Sultan never ran. Since 1907 the province of Asir, under Said Idrissi, had been in revolt. In 1913 the great Wahabi chieftain, Ibn Saud, drove the Turks out of El Hasa, the province of eastern Arabia which borders on the Persian Gulf. The Arab had never wholly bowed to the Osmanli, and once the Osmanli fell under the spell of the unbeliever it was certain that the conservative theologians of the peninsula would assert themselves. They could not endure to see the shrines of their creed in the hands of men who daily by word and deed flouted the mysteries of Islam.

On the outbreak of war the Aga Khan issued a message to Indian Moslems in which he pointed out that, since Turkey had shown herself to be no more than a tool in German hands, she

had lost her position as trustee of Islam. "The Kaiser's Resident will be the real ruler of Turkey, and will control the Holy Cities." The wiser brains in Constantinople had long before the war foreseen trouble with Arabia, and Abdul Hamid, who was no fool, had built the Hedjaz railway that he might be able to pour troops southward to meet the first threatenings of revolt. But the new masters were less alert. They contented themselves with vapourings about a *jehad*, while they continued to outrage every Islamic sanctity, and in Syria and Arabia grossly maltreated the Arab population. As against such anarchy the grim chiefs of southern Arabia looked with friendly eyes towards the Allies. If there could be degrees of merit among unbelievers, the latter were clearly the better friends of the faithful. Both Britain and France ruled over millions of contented Moslems, and safeguarded them in the practice of their religion. In November 1914 the Government of India had announced that the Holy Places of Arabia, including the Holy Shrines of Mesopotamia and the port of Jeddah, would be immune from attack or molestation from the British naval and military forces so long as there was no interference with pilgrims from India to the shrines in question; and at Britain's request the Governments of France and Russia gave similar assurances.

The Grand Sherif of Mecca was a powerful—perhaps the most powerful—prince of western and central Arabia. He was the real ruler of Mecca, and, along with his able sons the Emirs Feisul and Abdullah, exercised a unique authority due to his temporal possessions and his religious prestige as sprung from the blood of the Koreish. On 9th June, supported by the Arab tribes of the neighbourhood, he proclaimed Arab independence of Turkey, and took prompt steps to make good his challenge. He occupied Mecca and—with the help of the British navy—the port of Jeddah, as well as the town of Taif to the south-east; captured the Turkish garrisons, taking in Jeddah alone 45 officers, 1,400 men, and six guns; and laid siege to Medina. He cut and destroyed parts of the Hedjaz railway, to prevent reinforcements coming from the north. The revolt spread fast. The Emir Nuri Shalan, who had already refused to support Djemal, joined the Grand Sherif, and presently the Said Idrissi of Asir took up arms, and captured the Red Sea port of Kunfidah, 150 miles south of Mecca. The policy of the Arab leaders was to refrain from shedding Moslem blood, and to invest the Turkish garrisons till they surrendered. On 27th July Yambo, the port of Medina, fell; and in Medina itself

the Turkish troops were closely besieged, while the fires of revolt spread northward among the Arabs all the way to Damascus.

Constantinople could not sit still under a blow which threatened the little religious prestige that remained to her. Troops were hurried south, and part of the forces destined for the invasion of Egypt were diverted to the new theatre of war. The Grand Sherif had no easy task before him, for he had to fight a modern army with levies whose equipment and discipline belonged to another age. But his action had pricked the bubble of Pan-Islamism which Germany had sought to use for her own ends. In August he issued a striking Proclamation to the Moslem world to explain his action. He and the princes of his race, he said, had acknowledged the Turkish Government because they desired to strengthen the House of Islam and preserve the rule of the House of Osman. But the Committee of Union and Progress had ground down the true believer, had forgotten the precepts of the Koran, had insulted the Khalifate, and had despised the Corner-stone of the Faith. It was open to all men to see that the rulers of Turkey were Enver Pasha, Djemal Pasha, and Talaat Bey, who were doing whatsoever they pleased. In such a state of things he could not leave the life and religion of his own Arab people to be the plaything of the godless. "God has shown us the way to victory, and has cut off the hand of the oppressors, and cast out their garrison from our midst. We have attained independence from the rest of the Ottoman Empire, which is still groaning under the tyranny of the enemy. Our independence is complete and absolute, and will not be affected by any foreign influence or aggression. Our aim is the preservation of Islam and the uplifting of its standard in the world. We fortify ourselves in our noble religion, which is our only guide. In the principles of the administration of justice we are ready to accept all things in harmony with the Faith, and all that leads to the Mountain of Islam, and particularly to uplift, so far as we have the strength, the mind and spirit of all classes of the people. This we have done according to the dictation of our creed, and we trust that our brethren in all parts of the world will each do the duty that is incumbent upon them, that the brotherhood of Islam may be confirmed."

The Hedjaz revolt delayed but did not prevent the attack upon Egypt. This came in the first week of August, and was promptly scattered to the winds. Sir Archibald Murray had all his preparations made, and, as was expected, the enemy advanced and followed the old northern route which had been taken before the Katia

engagement in April. He knew that we had thinned our forces in Egypt and had sent several divisions to the West, and he hoped to find the desert front weakly held. He was mistaken, for since April the Katia front had been strongly entrenched, admirable communications had been established, and we had advanced our flanking posts in every adjacent oasis. The Turkish force, which included many German officers, was under the command of the German general Kress von Kressenstein, and numbered some 18,000 men. It was elaborately equipped with many light mountain batteries, and a great supply of water-tanks carried on camels. It hoped, apparently, by timing its attack for the hottest season of the Egyptian summer, to get the benefit of surprise.

On the evening of Thursday, 3rd August, the British force—the 52nd Division of Territorials from the Scottish Lowlands, under Major-General the Hon. H. A. Lawrence—was drawn up on a line some seven miles long from Romani, twenty-three miles east of the Canal, to the Mediterranean. Its left flank was protected by British monitors in the Bay of Tinah, and on the right lay General Chauvel's Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division. About midnight on the 3rd the Turks delivered their attack, and the fighting lasted through the whole of the 4th. The Lowland infantry stood firm, while the cavalry on the right slowly withdrew, entangling the enemy in a maze of sand-dunes. By the afternoon reinforcements had come up—the Warwickshire and Gloucester Yeomanry, and a brigade of Lancashire Territorials from the 42nd Division. About five o'clock our whole front advanced to the counter-attack, and before the dusk fell the enemy line was hopelessly broken. The defeat was soon changed to a rout. From daylight on the 5th our cavalry were harassing the Turkish retreat, and sweeping up prisoners and guns. On a wide front, with mounted troops on their flanks, our infantry pressed on through weather that in the daytime was 100° in the shade. By Monday, the 7th, the fleeing enemy was nineteen miles east of the battlefield. On the 9th he attempted a stand, but was driven on by our cavalry. Then, and not till then, we called a halt, and counted our spoils. We had taken some 4,000 prisoners, including 50 officers, and the wounded and dead we estimated at at least 5,000, so that half the total force of the invaders had been accounted for. The action was one of the most successful and conclusive in the campaign. The fighting quality of the Anzac troopers and the British Territorials was worthy of their great Gallipoli record, and there could be no higher praise.

III.

But it was in the Balkan peninsula, and especially in connection with Greece, that, outside the main battle-grounds, lay the chief preoccupation of the Allies. In the modern world the state, like the individual, cannot live to itself alone. Nationalism in any robust sense implies internationalism, and a hermit people, pursuing with complete absorption a domestic purpose, is an anachronism destined to a speedy disappearance. With the greater and more solidly founded nations this interconnection of interests may lead to a richer civic life, since only in co-operation and international fraternity is to be found security for legitimate national development. But the smaller states may find in it their undoing. Unable to rank as honourable rivals, they are apt to attach themselves as suitors to some nation or group of nations, and to play in interstate policy the part rather of courtiers than of statesmen. The position is inevitable, and it leads to a certain pettiness of international outlook. They do not hope to sway the councils of the world by wealth or armed strength, so they seek their advantage by adroitness and diplomacy. Absorbed in their local ambitions, they cannot take the wider view of the future of a continent, and, being compelled to play by petty methods, they become petty in their conception even of their own interests. The trees are always before their eyes, but the wood escapes their vision.

Greece shared to the full in this drawback of all little peoples, and she had other disadvantages due to her past history and her racial character. That she was in a true sense a nation no man could doubt. Her long bondage to Constantinople, her heroic struggle for freedom, her laborious rectification of her borders, her victories in the Balkan Wars, had given her nationhood. But it was a nationhood somewhat narrow and unintelligent in its outlook on affairs beyond its frontiers. She had no very clear ambitions. Turkey was the secular enemy, Bulgaria an ancient rival. The Balkan Wars had given her territorial enlargement towards the north somewhat beyond her deserts, and in Europe her only unrealized aim concerned the boundaries of Epirus and the chameleon-like fortunes of Albania. She aspired to rule all the islands of the Ægean, and her wiser citizens, remembering ancient Hellas, looked forward to a great domination of the Anatolian coast which should revive the glories of classic Ionia. But nowhere was there any clearly defined objective, such as Bulgaria and Serbia possessed, and in default of a clear aim Greece was doomed to a policy of

waiting, in the hope of snatching some casual advantage from the European conflagration.

To an impartial observer it seemed that there were two established facts which must dominate the Greek outlook. One was Turkey, who was the eternal foe. At Turkey's expense alone could Greece enlarge her boundaries in the one direction where enlargement was possible. The second was that Greece was a maritime nation, trading throughout the whole eastern Mediterranean, and her obvious alliance was, therefore, with the great Sea Powers. It would be suicidal if she ever joined a national group which included Turkey, and arrayed herself against the British navy. Moreover, the German dream of Eastern empire was in direct conflict not only with her legitimate aspirations, but with her continued national independence. These truths were perceived by the abler minds among Greek statesmen; they were perceived most clearly by M. Venizelos; but they were scarcely present to the nation at large, owing partly to an imperfect education in foreign politics, and partly to the fact that they were negative things, and had not the appeal of a direct territorial objective.

Hence there was no widespread popular conviction to counteract the fatal tendency to trim and hesitate which was the Greek tradition in foreign affairs, and had become a second nature to the common politician. The Court at Athens had strong German affinities; the Greek army, like most other armies, was under the spell of Prussian methods; and its Staff was avowedly dubious as to the Allies' chances of victory. Let it be said that the Allies had given Greece small reason for confidence in their military wisdom. The attack on Gallipoli had justified most of the Greek objections to their policy. Mesopotamia had not increased their reputation, and their efforts in the Balkans had failed to avert Serbia's destruction. Not unnaturally, with the fate of Belgium, Serbia, and Montenegro before her eyes, Greece hesitated to league herself in the field with Powers who had so far proved themselves broken reeds for the little nations to lean on.

In such circumstances the inclination—supported by the whole tradition of past policy—was to wait till the success of one side in the struggle was beyond question. The attitude was not heroic, but it is hard to condemn it as unreasonable. Moreover, it must be remembered that to a considerable section of the Greek people the larger ideals for which the Allies fought had small attraction. The country was an incomplete democracy. The Court had more sympathy with the Prussian doctrine than with the liberalism of

France and Britain. Russia in occupation of Constantinople was a bugbear even to many Greeks who otherwise would have been ranged on the Allied side. The Western Powers were apt to assume that their own views of the European situation must appeal overwhelmingly to any land that possessed some kind of popular government. They forgot the difference that local atmosphere may make in the colouring of facts. Germany was not slow to take advantage of the uncertain elements in the Greek polity. Her agents worked unceasingly to present the Allied case as the effort of Powers, militarily inferior, to cloak a self-seeking purpose with dishonest rhetoric.

The charge against the Government of Greece was not that they followed a prudential course and waited, for the world is not entitled to demand quixotry from any people. It was that, when Greece's own territorial rights were infringed, they still wavered, and that they blanketed popular opinion and violated the free constitution of the country. An appeal to the people in the summer of 1915 had restored Venizelos to power. Early in October his proposal to carry out Greece's obligations to Serbia under her treaty of alliance was vetoed by the King, and he was compelled to retire from office. Thereafter constitutional government disappeared from the peninsula. Irregular elections were held, from which the Venizelists abstained, and for eight months the land was governed by a camarilla who had no popular sanction, and were clearly unrepresentative of the Hellenic people. Greek policy was, therefore, during this period the policy not of the nation, but of a bureaucracy who were legally usurpers. Worse still, the King and his advisers were prepared to sacrifice a portion of Greek soil if they were only left in peace. The Bulgarian occupation of Fort Rupel on May 26, 1916, was not the result of superior armed forces, but of connivance on the part of the Athens Government. Timidity had in this case brought statesmen into naked treason. There was no parallel between such an occupation and the permission to Sarrail's army to hold the Salonika zone. The latter had the assent of the Greek people through their constitutional mouthpiece, and it was accorded to the Powers who had won and guaranteed Greece's freedom.* The former was a gift of territory to an avowed enemy, who had

* Art. 5 of Protocol No. 1 of the Treaty of 1830 provided that "no troops belonging to one of the contracting Powers shall be allowed to enter the territory of the new Greek state without the consent of the two other Courts who signed the treaty." This clause implied that the Protecting Powers were entitled to send troops to Greece provided they were in agreement with each other and had Greece's assent.

always claimed the land, and would not willingly depart from what she had once occupied.

For this new aberration of Greek policy the King was mainly responsible. King Constantine had deserved well of his country, and had hitherto enjoyed considerable popular prestige. But he was too slight a character for the rough times in which his lot was cast. Well-meaning and amiable, he had a mind incapable of grasping a new and complex situation, but tenacious of the small dogmatic stock-in-trade with which the lesser type of monarch is provided. He hankered after the absolutist air of Prussia, salubrious to minor royalties, and he dreaded the vast and incalculable forces which he felt around him. He believed firmly—it was the sum of his convictions—that Germany would win. Fear was at the root of his attitude, fear of the unknown, fear of the known in the shape of Germany, fear of a false step which might cost him his throne, fear of everything and everybody. And like many another weak soul before him, he was as obstinate as he was timid. His policy became a kind of fanatical impassivity.

The surrender of the forts roused in Greece a storm of popular protest. The Venizelist journals appeared with black borders, and among the Greeks in Salonika there were impassioned demonstrations. It was announced that the Athens Government had protested formally to Berlin and Sofia, but the Allied Powers were not misled by this device. They deemed it necessary to take strong precautionary measures, for their position at Salonika was impossible with a treacherous Government in their rear, and on their flank mobilized Greek forces who might any hour receive orders hostile to the Allied plan. On 8th June the British Foreign Office announced that from 7 a.m. on 6th June certain restrictive orders had been put in force regarding the export of coal to Greece and Greek shipping in British ports with the object of preventing supplies reaching the enemy. The result was virtually a pacific blockade,* similar to that which had been proclaimed during the Salonika dispute in the previous November.

The Allies' action gave Athens food for reflection. Greece was at the mercy of the Powers which held the sea, and the British and French warships at the Piræus were cogent arguments. On 9th

* A pacific blockade is one of the forms of persuasion known to international law which do not imply an absolute warlike rupture. "They are supposed to be used," says Hall, "when an injury has been done . . . for which a State cannot get redress by purely amicable means, and which is scarcely of sufficient magnitude to be the motive of immediate war." Greek ports had already been pacifically blockaded by the Great Powers in 1827, 1886, and 1897.

June M. Skouloudis announced in the Chamber a partial demobilization of the army. Twelve classes would be disbanded, and the rest given leave, the object being to prove to the Allies that the Greek Government were without aggressive designs. But there were elements in the bureaucracy which had no thought of concessions. On Monday, 12th June, the secret police organized a military *fête* in Athens, after which bands of hooligans paraded the streets and insulted the Allied Embassies with complete impunity. Thereupon the Allied Governments presented their ultimatum. Greece in regard to them was not in the position of an ordinary neutral. France, Britain, and Russia were the Protecting Powers of the State, according to the Treaties of 1863 on which Hellenic liberties were founded, and had the right to insist as trustees that these liberties were not infringed, and that their ward was not plotting mischief. They were in the strictest sense the guarantors of the Hellenic commonweal; and the King, though they had chosen to make the throne hereditary, was their agent, put there to "give effect to the wishes of the Greek nation." If he chose to neglect his task, it was the duty as well as the right of the trustee Powers to call him sharply to order. The Allied Note, after reciting the offences of the Greek Government, demanded an immediate and real demobilization of the Greek army; the installation of a new ministry which should give guarantees for benevolent neutrality; the dissolution of the Chamber, followed by new elections; and the dismissal of certain police officials.

On 21st June it was announced that the Premier, M. Skouloudis, would retire, and that his place would be filled by M. Zaimis, a friend of the Allies, who had succeeded M. Venizelos on October 4, 1915. That day, on behalf of the King, the new Prime Minister accepted the Allied demands, and set about forming that "business Cabinet devoid of any political prejudice" for which the Note had stipulated. So far the situation seemed easier, but it was a false peace. Baron Schenk and the other German agents were as busy as ever, and among the disbanded soldiers the Royalists formed Reservists' Leagues, which were openly anti-popular and anti-Ally. The one hope lay in the promised appeal to the people, for it was certain that fresh elections after demobilization would restore M. Venizelos to power. But events were soon to happen which made an appeal to the electorate impossible.

The military situation at Salonika during June and the first half of July showed little change from that of the early summer. The Bulgarian raid of May had given them the forts of Rupel and

Dragotin, the keys of the Struma valley. During May the Austro-German troops were for the most part withdrawn from the Salonika front, being urgently needed elsewhere. The centre army was, indeed, still known as the XI. German Army under General von Winckler, but it contained at the most one German division. The right wing was held by the Bulgarian I. Army under Gueshov, and the left wing by the Bulgarian II. Army under Todorov. These three parts of the enemy force corresponded to the three natural divisions of the front. The zone west of the Vardar, where lay the road to Monastir, was mainly mountainous; that between the Vardar and the Struma, a plain criss-crossed by low hills till the Belashitza range was reached north of Lake Doiran; the eastern zone was mountainous in the north, and guarded from the sea by coastal ranges. The Allied battle-front was held on the right by the main British contingent, under General Milne; the centre by the French and the British left wing; and the western zone, the hundred miles between the Vardar and Albania, by the Serbian army, which had now taken its position in the line. The dispositions were wise, for they gave Monastir as the objective to the men of the Crown Prince Alexander, who at the end of July assumed the command, and so brought them at once within view of the frontiers of their native land. On the extreme left an Italian force, based on Avlona, was preparing to strike through Albania as a covering detachment on the flank, and an Italian contingent was also present with the Serbians. The whole composite Allied army was still numerically smaller than the Bulgarian and German forces opposed to them, and the latter had every advantage of position.

As we have seen in an earlier chapter, to advance from Salonika was no easy task. A certain gain of ground could be achieved at once, and as a matter of fact was achieved during the summer, when the Allied centre pushed north to a line a little south of Doiran station. The enemy had not drawn in close to the Salonika defences, but had kept his front on a wide semicircle commanding the entrance to the difficult part of the Vardar valley. The Vardar and Struma routes were alike almost impracticable as avenues to the heart of Bulgaria. Only on the west was there any reasonable objective, and Monastir could not be taken without hard and difficult campaigning. Its importance lay not in its strategic so much as its political value. It lay in an isolated pocket among mountains, and gave no ready access to the central Serbian terrain. But its possession had been one of Bulgaria's chief objects in enter-

ing the war, and its loss would undoubtedly so exasperate the Bulgarian people that they might well prove refractory to Germany's orders. The true meaning, however, of the Allied activity was to be found in connection with the Rumanian situation. The Government of Bucharest was now committed to the Allied cause; and in order to protect Rumania's mobilization against Austria, it was necessary to make certain that Bulgaria did not strike first upon her flank. The object of the Allies was, therefore, to hold as large a Bulgarian force as possible on the line between Ostrovo and the Gulf of Orphani. Their principal purpose would be achieved if they detained the bulk of the Bulgarian army, even though their advance were inconsiderable.

Sarrail, who was now in command of the whole Allied forces in the Balkans, was perplexed with contradictory orders. On 15th July he was told to occupy the attention of the Bulgarians at once; then he was bidden wait until three days after the signature of the agreement with Rumania. On the morning of 10th August the French heavy guns began a bombardment of the town of Doiran, thirty-five miles west-north-west of Salonika, close to the junction of the Greek, Bulgarian, and Serbian frontiers. Next day the French troops occupied Doiran station, on the Salonika–Seres railway, and a height south of the town. Doldjeli, south-west of Doiran, was presently carried. And then, on 15th August, the situation was completely changed, for the enemy himself took the offensive. The movement had no direct connection with the Rumanian crisis. It was sanctioned by Falkenhayn to enable the Bulgarian left wing to push forward to the same latitude as that of the right, and so shorten the line. The demobilization of the Greek army made the plan practicable.

On 17th August the Bulgarians struck in three sectors, and their main effort was very properly on their flanks. They did not contemplate a frontal attack on Salonika, but they believed that they could count on an easy advance in the two flanking wedges of Greek territory, defended nominally by Greek troops, the more especially as the occupation of Fort Rupel had given them the key of the lower Struma and Kavala. On the east Todorov flung patrols across the Mesta east of Kavala, and pushed south and west towards the left bank of the Struma. In the centre Winckler attacked the French and British at Doldjeli, but failed to advance. In the west Gueshov occupied Florina, a little town in Greek territory seventeen miles south of Monastir which was held by Serbian outposts, and advanced upon Banitza, west of the Ostrovo

lake. During the next few days the centre stood fast around Doiran; and the Serbians in the west, retiring slowly towards Ostrovo, held the enemy in check, and inflicted considerable losses. But east of the Struma Todorov moved swiftly towards Kavala, and on the 19th was within seven miles of the town. French and British detachments were east of the Struma as far as the railway south of Demir Hissar, but the Kavala area was held only by Greek troops, who were without instructions. Bulgaria saw her way to an easy triumph, much needed for domestic comfort, at the expense of her southern neighbour and with the connivance of that neighbour's king.

Presently Todorov was on a line two miles east of the Struma, between Lakes Tahinos and Butkova, while the Allies held the main bridges. Banitza was now in Bulgarian hands, but the line west of Lake Ostrovo was stoutly maintained, and farther north in the Moglena mountains the Crown Prince Alexander made good progress towards the Cerna valley. Meanwhile, on the east, Todorov was advancing on Seres and was at the gates of Kavala. On 25th August the Bulgarians occupied the forts of the latter town, and were shelled by British warships. The occupation was a breach of a direct promise given to Greece by Germany at the opening of hostilities.

These events complicated beyond hope the already sufficiently complex position in Greek politics. Eastern Macedonia was largely in Bulgaria's hands, and the question of the fate of the Greek troops there—more than two divisions—was fraught with extraordinary difficulty. The Greek people were beginning to stir. A fort or two might be overlooked, but now they had lost a province, and lost it without striking a blow. The Athens Government in their perplexity hastened to conciliate the Allies. Dousmanis, the Chief of Staff, was dismissed, and his place taken by General Moschopoulos, the commander of the 3rd Corps at Salonika, and a friend of France and Britain. But the problem could not be solved by the sacrifice of a staff officer. The general election, on which alone a true settlement depended, could not take place when a large district was occupied by the enemy, and the position of the Greek troops in the occupied territory must lead to a split in the army itself. It looked as if the Greek situation was approaching the point when relief could only be won by some act of revolution.

At this moment, when the whole Balkan front was astir, and the Greek Government were fixed on the horns of a dilemma, Rumania entered the war on the Allied side.

CHAPTER LXI.

RUMANIA ENTERS THE WAR.

August 4, 1914–*September* 1, 1916.

Early History of Rumania—Centres of Teutonic Influence—King Carol—Bratianu's Tactics—The Rumanian Army—The Cabinet decides for War—The King's Message—Germany's Calculations—Hindenburg and Ludendorff succeed Falkenhayn.

(*Map*, p. 140.)

DURING two years of war Rumania, under great difficulties and amid manifold temptations, had steered a course of strict neutrality. To the resolution come to at the Crown Council of August 4, 1914, she had scrupulously adhered. The first Russian successes in Galicia had appeared to sway her towards the Allies; but the Russian retreat in the summer of 1915 corrected the balance. Italy's entrance into the war shook her; and the alliance of Bulgaria with Germany and the Serbian *débâcle* for a moment seemed about to force her to draw the sword, whether she willed it or not. War is a maelstrom into which the most resolute neutral may be drawn, and during the early summer of 1916 it became apparent to the world that both external and internal pressure would soon force the court of Bucharest to cast in its lot with one or other of the belligerent sides. Brussilov's resounding successes in the north brought the moment of decision very nigh.

Rumania was only indirectly a Balkan state, and her situation, half Latin half Slav, as an outpost of the West at the gateway of the East, gave the little country at this crisis of the war a profound significance. The territory inhabited mainly by the Rumanian people, if constituted into a national state, would have formed a square block based upon the lower Danube, and embracing the actual Rumania, the Austrian district of Bukovina, the Hungarian province of Transylvania, and the Russian province of Bessarabia. It was the ancient Dacia, conquered by Trajan, and lost to Rome early in the Barbarian invasions. But so strong had been the impress of that mighty Power that the tradition of Rome

continued; the Rumanians had in their veins, along with a large Slav admixture, the blood of the old Roman colonists, and their speech was still in its essentials a Romance tongue. Rumania, as the world knew it, consisted of two provinces widely different in character, into which projected from the west the wedge of Transylvania. The eastern, Moldavia, watered by the streams of the Pruth and Sereth, was a region of black steppe earth, highly fertile, which made it one of the granaries of Europe. The western, Wallachia, lay between the southern Carpathians and the Danube; the northern part being a broad upland sloping from the hills, and the southern the alluvial plain of the river. Both provinces were rich in agricultural, pastoral, and mineral wealth.

The mediæval history of Wallachia and Moldavia was the tale of border states between the Turk, the Hungarian, and the Slav—a tangled tale of savage and incessant war. In 1241 the principate of Wallachia was founded by the first feudal army which crossed the Carpathians. Then came the Turkish conquest, and the land became part of the Turkish Empire; but the province was ruled, after the Turkish fashion, with a measure of autonomy by local chiefs. Now and then patriots arose, such as Stephen the Great and Michael the Brave, who raised fleeting standards of independence, and were on the verge of founding a Rumanian nation. In a country so situated it was inevitable that the system should be aristocratic. The government was in the hands of the great landowners, the *boyars*, who were partly of native and partly of Phanariot—that is, Byzantine Greek—origin, and the peasants tilled the soil as serfs. These boyars elected the princes, who ruled the provinces as feudatories of Turkey, and held their office on a seven years' tenure. Till 1821 the hospodars, or princes, were mainly Phanariots, but after that date came a succession of native rulers and a new consciousness of nationality.

The modern history of Rumania began with the war of 1828–9 and the Treaty of Adrianople, when the provinces passed under the suzerainty of Russia, and the hospodars, being now elected for life, began to change from the chiefs of a nationality to something of the status of kings. The country shared in the European democratic movement of 1848, when a revolution broke out under C. A. Rosetti and the two Bratianus—a revolution which was quickly suppressed, and led to the re-establishment of the power of the boyars. During the Crimean War Russia occupied Rumania, but evacuated it after the successful resistance of the Turks on the Danube, and it was held by Austria under an agreement with France and Britain.

The Treaty of Paris in 1856 re-established the Turkish suzerainty, but granted a form of autonomy to the two provinces under elected princes chosen for life. A strong movement began for national union, and in 1859 Colonel Cuza was elected prince of both Moldavia and Wallachia—the first ruler of a united Rumania. Turkey accepted the situation, on condition that Prince Cuza had a separate ministry and administration for each province. In 1861 he established a common ministry and an assembly of representatives at Bucharest; and in the following year the union of the principalities was sanctioned by the Sultan, and modern Rumania came into being.

Prince Cuza was a vigorous ruler, who introduced democratic reforms by the methods of despotism, but had little skill in handling the machinery of politics and party government. The people at large were on his side, but the ruling classes, who formed the Liberal and Conservative parties, would have none of him. The Conservatives objected to his new land law, which abolished serfdom, and to his introduction of universal suffrage; and the Liberals, whatever they thought of his measures, disapproved of the means by which he enforced them. The national finances fell into confusion, and a revolution, supported by the army, drove him to abdicate in 1866. The Rumanians, looking round for a successor, applied first to Count Philip of Flanders, the brother of Leopold, King of the Belgians. On his refusal, the principality was offered, mainly on the advice of Napoleon III., to a prince of the Catholic branch of the Hohenzollerns, Charles of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen, whose sister was the wife of Philip of Flanders and the mother of King Albert of Belgium. Charles accepted, and was installed at Bucharest on May 22, 1866, recognized by Turkey, and adopted by a specially summoned Constitutional Assembly. The same Assembly drew up a constitution which, with a few emendations introduced later, was that of modern Rumania.

Prince Carol—to adopt the Rumanian version of his name—proved a wise and efficient ruler. He introduced order into the finances, developed the railway system and the Danube ports, and started his country, hitherto very backward, on a new era of prosperity. Not unnaturally, he leaned heavily on Germany, and it was German capital and German advisers that he used in his reforms, while he took Bismarck as his mentor in external politics. Following the advice of that far-seeing statesman, he kept on good terms with Russia, since through Russia alone could come the realization of his dream of true independence. Meantime

he set to work to give the country a modern army. The old provinces had never had more than a rude kind of militia, and Prince Carol found the existing forces badly armed and disciplined. Himself an ex-officer of the Prussian Guard, he introduced the Prussian system of organization, increased the numbers, and drew upon Krupp for a new artillery. With an efficient army at his back he waited on his chance to use it.

The chance came with the Russo-Turkish War of 1877. On 24th April of that year he signed a military convention with Russia, granting, with the connivance of Austria, free passage to the Russian army through Rumania, which thus became the advanced base for the invasion of Turkey. A month later, on 22nd May, he declared his independence of the Porte. After the first Russian failure at Plevna, he crossed the Danube with 30,000 men, and greatly distinguished himself on the northern front. In the grand assault on Plevna, on 11th September, the Rumanians carried No. 1 Grivitsa Redoubt, the only one of the Turkish works which was stormed and permanently held. For such service Rumania looked for an adequate reward, but the results were below her expectations and her deserts. The Congress of Berlin did, indeed, recognize her complete independence, but with territorial changes which deprived the gift of most of its charm. That part of Bessarabia which Russia had ceded to Moldavia under the Treaty of Paris was restored to the Russian Empire, though it had a large Rumanian population. As compensation, Rumania received the bulk of the Turkish province of the Dobrudja, whose treeless steppes and riverine swamps seemed a poor exchange for the rich Bessarabian plains.

The result was an abiding grudge against Russia, her old ally in the field. In 1881 Prince Carol was proclaimed king, and, in spite of the secular grievance of Transylvania, the country began to tend towards a *rapprochement* with Austria-Hungary. The common people were vehemently anti-Hungarian, and among the politicians the extreme Right was Russophil and the extreme Left Francophil; but the bulk of the aristocracy and the middle classes were in favour of the policy of the King. In 1883 a meeting took place with Bismarck and the Austrian Count Kalnoky, and a secret agreement was concluded, under which the Rumanian army in certain contingencies was to be at Austria's disposal. Rumania had become a real, if publicly unacknowledged, member of the Triple Alliance. Under the ægis of the King, the Austro-German influence spread and ramified during the succeeding thirty years.

To understand Rumania's position on the outbreak of the European War, it is necessary to remember her territorial ambitions, her economic interests, and the state of her internal politics. These three elements conditioned the problem which faced her statesmen and the diplomatists of Europe from August 1914 to the beginning of August 1916.

The difficulty of all the small countries of south-eastern Europe, as we have already seen, was that their territorial did not correspond to their racial boundaries. The Turkish wars had dislocated the natural frontiers of races, and each state saw numbers of her own "nationals" under an alien and frequently oppressive rule. The "unredeemed" areas of Rumania were Transylvania and Bessarabia, notably the former. Under the Dual Monarchy, in the Bukovina, in the Banat of Temesvar, and above all in Transylvania, lived some four millions of Rumanian blood. Transylvania had been handed over to Hungary by Francis Joseph in 1867, and though the Government of Budapest the following year bound themselves to respect the rights, language, and religion of their Rumanian subjects, Hungarian nationalism speedily made the pact a dead letter. The Rumanian schools were Magyarized, the language proscribed, and the elections gerrymandered. On a basis of population the Rumanians should have had sixty-nine representatives in the Hungarian Parliament; they never had more than fourteen, and in 1910 were reduced to five. The Rumanians of Transylvania, penalized and discontented, appealed naturally to their kinsfolk across the mountains, and the appeal did not fall on heedless ears. A new state is sensitively conscious of its racial affiliations, and the case of the Rumanians in Transylvania and the Vlachs in Macedonia profoundly affected popular opinion. Kings and Cabinets may follow a course of enlightened opportunism and make alliances with ancient foes, but the common people think in simpler terms and have longer memories. Leagues were established in the Rumanian capital to watch over the interests of their "nationals" beyond the frontier, and though this popular feeling might remain long quiescent, there was always the chance that at a moment of crisis it might break into flame and destroy the work of a passionless diplomacy.

Rumania had, therefore, causes of grievance against both Russia and Austria-Hungary. She had, too, a natural ambition to enlarge her territories so as to make them correspond to racial distribution. Finally, as the years passed, she began to realize the strategic value of her geographical position. As the far-reaching

policy of the Central Powers slowly took shape it was obvious that Rumania, on the flank of the *Drang nach Osten*, acquired a peculiar significance. Her alliance would safeguard on the north that route to Constantinople which was the pilgrims' way of German dreams. If Russia, again, was ever to secure her desires and control the exits from the Euxine to the Ægean, Rumanian friendliness would be an invaluable aid. Finally, whatever course Balkan politics might take, whether in the direction of union or of continued rivalry, the land north of the Danube must play a vital part. At the same time, Rumania well understood that her strategic assets were also strategic disadvantages. In a quarrel with her powerful neighbours she offered too many avenues for assault. It behoved her, therefore, to go warily, and take no step without due thought, for only by circumspection could she hope to win her national ambitions and avoid—what was never outside the sphere of the possible—national dissolution.

These considerations affected Rumanian action in the first great crisis that faced her after the war of 1877, the two Balkan Wars. She refused to join the Balkan League, having no particular grievance against Turkey; while on Macedonian questions she had never seen eye to eye with Greece and Bulgaria. She contented herself with warning the belligerents that she could not permit any one of them to become predominant in the Balkans, and mobilized her army to watch events. When Bulgaria's sudden attack on her former allies precipitated the Second Balkan War, Rumania was forced to act. The event had been foreseen, and a provisional arrangement had been made with Serbia and Greece. To the world at large it looked as if King Carol's conduct was based merely on the desire to fish in troubled waters, but in reality there were sound reasons of policy behind it. Bulgaria had upset all hopes of a Balkan equilibrium as a result of the First War, and her success would give her a Balkan hegemony most dangerous to Rumanian interests. It was Russia who took the severest view of Bulgarian wrong-doing, and King Carol consulted and secured the assent of Petrograd before he intervened. He crossed the Danube at two points, occupied Silistria, threatened Sofia, and received as his reward a larger slice of the Dobrudja. This meant a rift in the thirty-years-old *entente* with Austria—a rift widened by Hungarian intransigence over Transylvania, which was now deeply concerning the Rumanian people. It meant, too, increasingly friendly relations with Russia, and there was talk of a marriage between the Crown Prince's eldest son and a daughter of the

RACIAL MAP OF RUMANIA AND NEIGHBOURING STATES.

(*Facing p. 140.*)

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Tsar. But King Carol did not allow the estrangement from Austria to affect his friendship with Austria's senior partner. Telegrams were exchanged between him and the German Emperor in which the latter was thanked as the only begetter of peace. The situation, therefore, on the eve of the Great War was that politically Rumania had long leaned to the Central Powers, and had been a virtual member of the Triple Alliance; but that during 1913 and the early months of 1914, though her friendliness to Germany continued, relations with Austria were becoming strained, while Bucharest and Petrograd were once again feeling their way towards co-operation and understanding.

The real centre of Teutonic influence in Rumania was to be found less in statecraft and diplomacy than in the sphere of finance and commerce. King Carol, in calling upon Germany for aid in developing his land, had, like the housewife in the fairy tale, invoked a sprite which could not easily be laid. From the early eighties Germany had set herself resolutely to capture Rumanian trade. She and Austria soon secured the lion's share of imports. Her agents were in every town; she controlled the chief industries; by long credit and goods exactly suited to the market she ousted both native and foreign competitors; and she made use of the large German-Jewish section of the commercial community to further her ends. The Deutsche Bank and the Disconto-Gesellschaft established themselves, and financed all new undertakings, as well as floating Government loans. Presently Rumania's public debt was largely in German hands. Germany built the railways and improved the ports; she ousted British and American financiers from the control of the great oilfields; all the electrical industries were in her charge, and the rich forests were largely in her power. These successes were won by genuine enterprise and the most painstaking assiduity. She had consuls to watch her interests in every centre, and if a foreign merchant wished a reliable report on some Rumanian question, he was compelled to go for it to German sources. Such a condition of things could not have come about had there not been reasons for it in the economics of Rumania's position. She was a non-industrial country, whose exports must always be mainly raw materials, mineral and agricultural. She therefore needed a highly industrialized country as her chief customer. She could not find this in Turkey or the Balkan States, or in Russia, who was herself in a like position. The natural trade channels ran westward towards Austria and Germany. Hence there was a reason for keeping on good terms with the Central

Powers far stronger than any treaty, a reason based on the livelihood of the humblest citizen. They represented for Rumania her bread and butter. A breach would only come if a crisis arose so tremendous that prudential considerations were forgotten, or an ally was found who could provide her with a more excellent way of life.

For the feeling of the people, in which the various problems of foreign policy and economics are reflected, and by which they are ultimately decided, we must look to the condition of Rumanian politics from the accession of King Carol onwards. The traditional parties were the Liberals and the Conservatives, the " Reds " and the " Whites," representing respectively the trading and professional classes and the landed aristocracy. At the beginning of King Carol's reign the National Liberals, under the elder Bratianu, were in power, and it was the Liberal Prime Minister who played a chief part in effecting the Austrian alliance of 1883. During his twelve years' term of office he aimed at extending the area of government control and building up a bureaucracy. Among the Conservatives a group of Tory democrats, called Junimists, arose, including men like Carp, Majorescu, and Marghiloman, who stood for individual liberty, and were, on the whole, more democratic than any section of the Liberal ranks. From 1891 onward the opposition between the two tended to become stereotyped and artificial, the ordinary game of the " ins " and " outs." But in 1910, when the younger Bratianu became head of the Liberal party, the Conservatives woke into life, and, under Take Jonescu, revived the old creed of the Tory democrats. The Cabinet which conducted the war with Bulgaria had a Junimist—Majorescu—as Premier, and two others, Take Jonescu and Marghiloman, as members. It fell from power in 1914, largely through its failure to secure any concessions from Hungary on the subject of Transylvania, and the Liberals, under Bratianu, took office with large majorities in both chambers.

So far there was no serious division between the parties on the question of foreign policy. The National Liberals, representing largely the commercial classes, were well alive to the value, and indeed the necessity, of the Austro-German connection. Among the Conservatives the Junimists were mainly pro-German, especially the leaders, Carp, Marghiloman, and Majorescu. Of the old Conservatives, men like Filipescu and Lahovary had leanings towards Russia, and a deep friendship for France. Take Jonescu stood by himself. He was convinced that great events were

preparing, and he looked further into the future than his colleagues. He envisaged a situation in which Rumania's course must be determined on other grounds than the traditional attachments of politicians. On the eve of war we may say that the general tendency of the politicians was conservative—to cling to the old Teutonic alliance, but that the Balkan Wars and the growing friendliness with Russia had somewhat weakened that alliance. They were for the most part in the mood to judge a new situation on its merits, and follow that tradition of *realpolitik* which forty years before King Carol had learned from Bismarck.

The first days of August 1914 brought Rumania face to face with the great decision. King Carol alone had no doubts. His German training and antecedents, and his lifelong friendship with the Central Powers, arrayed his sympathies on the Teutonic side. Moreover, he considered Rumania bound by the treaty of 1883 to intervene on Austria's behalf. His Government took a different view. They argued, as Italy argued in a similar case, that the occasion provided for by the terms of the agreement had not arisen, since they had had no notice of the sudden and violent procedure of Vienna, and Austria-Hungary must be considered the party attacking and not the attacked. It was clear that popular opinion was not in favour of intervention, and accordingly the King summoned on 4th August a special advisory Council, to which the Ministers and the leaders of the Opposition were alike invited. The question put to the members was that of immediate intervention on behalf of the Central Powers, and the King's policy had Carp as its sole supporter. Majorescu and Marghiloman preferred to wait, and to intervene only when Germany had made her victory certain. By an overwhelming majority the Council decreed in favour of neutrality, and the army, when appealed to, gave the same decision. The King, who believed that the verdict was against Rumania's interests and a stain on Rumania's honour, was compelled to acquiesce. Two months later, on the 10th of October 1914, he died.

His successor was his nephew Ferdinand, who had married a granddaughter of Queen Victoria. The new King had not the German leanings of his predecessor, and could consider his country's interests with an undivided mind ; while the Queen made no secret of her sympathy with the Allied cause. For the better part of two years, with the eyes of the world on her, Rumania suspended her judgment, swayed now hither now thither by the turn of events, while her press and her platforms were filled with propagandist

strife. The only alternatives were continued neutrality or entry into war on the Allied side. Never since the first month of the campaign had there been any real chance of her joining the Central Powers. Germany's performance in Belgium, her declaration of arrogant aims, and the plans for the Near East which she had loudly proclaimed, could have no attraction for a people which cherished its national independence. Moreover, the appearance of France, Russia, and Italy in the field awakened the sentiment and memories of a race which was part Latin and part Slav, but in no way Teuton.

With the first Russian successes the contest began between those Rumanians who clamoured for immediate union with the Allies, those who advocated delay, and those who were frankly on the German side. Of the first party were Take Jonescu and Filipescu; of the second, the Prime Minister, Bratianu; and of the third, Carp, Majorescu, and Marghiloman. Negotiations began with Russia, but it remained to be seen whether Petrograd would be in a position to fulfil its promises. The Government paid little attention to the assiduous overtures from the Central Powers and the appeals of the Marghilomanist press, but kept its eyes fixed on the northern frontier, where Ivanov was moving towards Cracow. In January 1915 Lechitski's advance into the Bukovina seemed to bring Rumania's day of action near. Britain lent her £5,000,000, the reserves were called up, and Bratianu threw out hints in Parliament of a "decisive" hour approaching. Negotiations were proceeding with Russia as to Rumania's territorial rewards—difficult negotiations, for Rumania put her claims high, and, having already received the promise of much for neutrality alone, wanted a large addition in return for alliance. Moreover, before she could intervene effectually she must have munitions; and since these could only come from the Western Allies, the road into the Black Sea must be cleared. The British guns then sounding at the Dardanelles were part of the inducement to Rumania to move. But everything miscarried: the British naval attack on the Dardanelles failed, and the landing of 25th April promised at the best a slow and difficult campaign. Presently Mackensen struck on the Donajetz, and Russia began her great retreat. The day of Rumanian intervention had been indefinitely postponed.

Bratianu had now an intricate game to play. He could not afford to quarrel with the triumphant Central Powers; and though he refused to allow munitions of war for Turkey to pass through his country, he was compelled to speak Germany fair, and suffer

Austria to purchase part of the Rumanian wheat crop. With remarkable steadfastness he resisted Austro-German blandishments and threats, and bided his time. He saw Bulgaria take the plunge and Serbia destroyed, and his country's strategic position grow daily graver. If she joined the Allies she would be hopelessly outflanked, with a hostile Bulgaria to the south and Pflanzer-Baltin in Czernovitz. Besides, she had as yet no munitions, and hard-pressed Russia could not help her on that score. Meantime popular feeling was kindling, and might soon be beyond control. The Conservative party had split in two, and a pro-Entente group had been formed, with first Lahovary and then Filipescu as its leader. The League of National Unity was active, student demonstrations filled the capital, and the inaction of the Government was attacked alike by the Interventionists under Take Jonescu and the pro-Germans under Marghiloman. Few statesmen have been placed in a more difficult position than Bratianu during the winter of 1915–16. He did the only thing possible in the circumstances, and played for time. He allowed the sale of cereals both to Britain and to Austria-Germany. It was clear that his policy of "expectant neutrality" had the support of the great mass of the Rumanian people, as was shown by the vote of confidence which he received in both Chambers when Parliament met.

During the early summer of 1916 a fusion took place between Take Jonescu's Young Conservatives and Filipescu's group. More and more Take Jonescu, brilliant alike as an orator and a writer, was becoming the interpreter of the national ideal. Fabian tactics may be wise, but they cannot last for ever. It was his business to organize and make explicit that popular feeling which would turn the balance with the cautious Bratianu. But arguments were preparing more potent than the eloquence of the popular leaders. On 4th June Brussilov struck his first blow. On 18th June Lechitski entered Czernovitz. By the end of the month the Bukovina was in Russian hands, and on the 1st of July the Allied armies of France and Britain advanced on the Somme.

In 1875, when King Carol was still busy with his reorganization, the Rumanian army numbered 18,000 regulars and 44,000 Territorials. By the law of 1872 men were enlisted for eight years, though large numbers were passed into the reserve before they had served their term. After the Russo-Turkish War the army was increased; and in 1882 the German system of localized corps, drawing all their recruits from one district, was introduced. Four army corps were then created. By the law of 1891 a closer

connection was established between the standing army and the Territorial force. The infantry were formed into thirty-four regiments, each with one regular and two Territorial battalions; while the Militia represented the second line, and a third line was available in the *levée en masse*. Territorials were trained for ninety days in their first year of service, and for thirty days in subsequent years. In 1902 the regular army was about 60,000 strong, with 75,000 Territorials. By increasing the available equipment, and calling up each year larger numbers of the annual class, the numbers grew rapidly, and a fifth army corps was presently formed. The declaration of war against Bulgaria in 1913, the seizure of Silistria, and the advance on Plevna afforded a good test of Rumania's capacity for mobilization. In 1914 the army was organized in three main divisions—Active, Reserve, and Militia. There were five corps, each of two divisions, with five more divisions formed of surplus reservists. Rumania could mobilize a first-line force of 220 battalions, 83 squadrons, 124 batteries, and 19 companies of fortress artillery—a strength of 250,000 rifles, 18,000 sabres, 300 machine guns, and about 800 field guns and howitzers, of which three-fourths were pieces of a recent pattern. These figures by no means represented the total available forces. In 1913, when the five army corps were mobilized against Bulgaria, no less than 200,000 recruits were sent back from the depots without being embodied. When the Great War began preparations were at once made for marshalling the whole force of the country in case of need. Cadres were formed for reserve battalions, and the aim was an eventual mobilization of a first-line army of ten corps —five active corps, and a reserve corps for each. This would provide an effective fighting force of between 500,000 and 600,000 men. The infantry were armed with the Mannlicher, the field guns and field howitzers came from Krupp, and the mountain batteries and heavy pieces from Creusot. Munitions were obviously a difficulty, for the Krupp supply would be cut off, and the country had no large steel works. A considerable supply of shells, however, had been accumulated, and Rumania, with Russia's aid, had endeavoured to make herself independent of Germany. She had no navy to speak of, only a small river and coast flotilla, with vessels conspicuously inferior to the Austrian Danube fleet. Her General Staff were for the most part good professional soldiers, who had imbibed much of the latest German teaching, but they suffered from the fact that few had had any experience of operations in the field under war conditions.

The strategic position, if she joined the Allies, involved a war on two fronts. Political considerations would, no doubt, impel her to cross the Carpathian passes, then weakly guarded by Austrian Landsturm, and occupy Transylvania. There it was difficult to believe she would be forestalled. But Bulgaria, at the bidding of Germany, was certain to strike, either by an advance into the Dobrudja, towards the Tchernavoda bridge which carried the line from Constanza to the capital, or by a crossing of the Danube. The river line made a formidable barrier on the south ; but it had been crossed before, and might be crossed again. Rumania must, therefore, use her forces to protect her southern borders on the Danube and in the Dobrudja, as well as to press through the passes into Transylvania. This the whole Rumanian people took for granted, and the wiser strategy—to hold the Carpathian passes as a defensive flank, and concentrate on cutting the railway to Constantinople—had little chance of consideration. Austria had been desperately depleted of men by Brussilov's offensive, and it was believed that she could not summon any great force to hold Transylvania. It was rather in the direction of Bulgaria that danger seemed to lie. Two Bulgarian armies were held by Sarrail at Salonika, while another watched the northern and north-eastern frontiers. If the last were reinforced by German or Turkish troops, a dangerous invasion of the Dobrudja was possible.

Hence Rumania, having made up her mind on her strategical purpose, required certain assurances before she could put it into execution. In the first place, Brussilov must continue his pressure between the Pripet and the Carpathians, so that Germany and Austria should have no troops to spare to reinforce the Transylvanian front. In the second place, Sarrail must initiate a vigorous offensive from Salonika, to keep Bulgaria's attention fixed on that quarter. In the third place, Russia must send an army to the Dobrudja, to co-operate with the Rumanian forces there. Finally, she must see her way to adequate munitions and a continuous future supply. This could only come by way of Russia from the Western Allies. The first trainload of shells which crossed the Moldavian border would be a warning to the Central Powers of an imminent declaration of war.

Early in June Russia pressed for a Rumanian advance to coincide with Brussilov's movements. It was the psychological moment for a successful entrance into the war, but Bucharest was not yet ready. On 17th July Filipescu and Take Jonescu spoke at a great Interventionist demonstration. They asked for

national union, an amalgamation of all parties such as France had seen ; and they appealed to the King to prove himself " the best of Rumanians." Bratianu said nothing, but he was busy negotiating with the Allied Powers—negotiating not only on the objective of the coming campaign, but on Rumanian rewards and the safeguards for her future. By the middle of July the matter was decided in principle, and the details of the supply of munitions from Russia had been settled. A provisional date was fixed for intervention, but the exact moment had to wait upon the fulfilment of certain preliminary guarantees. The Central Powers knew perfectly well what was happening at Bucharest ; but excellent though their intelligence system was, they could not fix the date of the rupture. Bratianu conducted the game with consummate finesse. He saw the Austrian and German Ministers, and left on them the impression that his mind was not yet made up. The King, as late as 25th August, received in audience Majorescu, who had just returned from Germany. He followed the example of his predecessor, for it was announced on 26th August that the King desired to hear in Council the views not only of his Ministers, but of all the party leaders. The meeting was fixed for 10 a.m. on the following day, 27th August.

The Council, in spite of the protests of Marghiloman, Carp, and Majorescu, ratified by a great majority the decision of the Cabinet. That evening a Note was handed to the Austro-Hungarian Minister containing a declaration of war. That Note set forth the reasons for Rumania's breach with the Triple Alliance. It referred to the long-standing grievance of Transylvania and the ill-treatment of the Transylvanian people. The Central Powers, it declared, had flung the world into the melting-pot, and old treaties had disappeared along with more valuable things. " Rumania, governed by the necessity of safeguarding her racial interests, finds herself forced to enter into line by the side of those who are able to assure her the realization of her national unity." To the army the King sent a message in the name of the heroes of the past. " The shades of Michael the Brave and Stephen the Great, whose mortal remains rest in the lands you march to deliver, will lead you to victory as worthy successors of the men who triumphed at Rasboieni, at Calugareni, and at Plevna." To the people at large he also appealed :—

" The war, which now for two years has hemmed in our position more and more closely, has shaken the old foundations of Europe and shown that henceforth it is on a national foundation alone that

the peaceful life of its peoples can be assured. It has brought the day which for centuries has been awaited by our national spirit—the day of the union of the Rumanian race. After long centuries of misfortune and cruel trials our ancestors succeeded in founding the Rumanian state, through the union of the Principalities, through the War of Independence, and through indefatigable toil from the time of the national renaissance. To-day it is given to us to render enduring and complete the work for a moment performed by Michael the Brave—the union of Rumanians on both sides of the Carpathians. It is for us to-day to deliver from the foreign yoke our brothers beyond the mountains and in the land of Bukovina, where Stephen the Great sleeps his eternal sleep. In us, in the virtues of our race, in our courage, lives that potent spirit which will give them once more the right to prosper in peace, to follow their ancestral customs, and to realize their aspirations in a free and united Rumania from the Theiss to the sea."

The formal breach was with Austria-Hungary alone, and for a moment Bratianu seems to have toyed with the idea of following Italy's earlier example, and limiting the war. The Allies made no objection. They knew that such a limitation was impracticable, and their forecast was right. For on 28th August Germany declared war on Rumania, and on 1st September Bulgaria followed suit. Fourteen nations were now engaged in the campaigns.

The entry of Rumania had been for some months expected and prepared for by Germany; and as early as 29th July Falkenhayn had made his dispositions. On the surface it gave the Allies a powerful recruit. It lengthened the Teutonic battlefield in the East by several hundred miles; it added more than a quarter of a million trained soldiers to the Allied strength; and above all it gave them control of economic assets which the Central Powers had counted on in their resistance to the British blockade. All these things were solid gains; and yet, paradox as it may seem, it is certain that the German High Command did not find the breach with Rumania wholly unwelcome.

Germany's most serious danger lay in the growing unification of the Allies' command, and its concentration upon the main theatres. Her situation in these theatres was very grave. Everywhere her offensive had failed; everywhere she was strategically and tactically on the defence. Her assets were dwindling, and if the Allied pressure continued relentlessly, the day must come, sooner or later, when her field strength must crumble. Her single hope was for disunion and divergency once more among her enemies. She believed that if their efforts were concentrated they

could outlast her; but if by some fortunate chance they should begin again to dissipate their energies, then the Central Powers, with their unity of purpose and uniformity of organization, might prove the stronger. Her desire was for a return of those happy days when the main fronts in Europe were stagnant, and at Gallipoli and in the Balkans France and Britain wasted themselves in vain adventures.

The appearance of Rumania in the war seemed to promise such a chance. The German Staff knew to a decimal Rumania's strength, and knew, too, that she would not play the game of war in its true rigour. She had her eyes fixed on her unliberated kinsfolk, and would advance forthwith on Transylvania. For this blunder she would be made to pay dearly, and with good fortune Bucharest might go the way of Belgrade and Brussels. But the Allies could not permit her to suffer the fate of Serbia. Her position was strategically too vital, and their honour was too deeply committed. Therefore in the event of a Rumanian *débâcle* Russian armies would hasten to her aid, and Sarrail at Salonika would be reinforced by troops destined for the Western battlefield. If this happened, the concentration of the Allied purpose would be weakened, and the unity of the Allied command might go to pieces. Brussilov must slacken his efforts, and the deadly acid in the West would cease to bite. Out of an apparent misfortune the Teutonic League might win a final triumph.

The calculation was shrewd, as this narrative will show. When the Rumanians crossed the passes they marched not to victory but to disaster. But the chronicle of their campaign must be postponed while we turn to the great offensive which, since the first day of July, the armies of France and Britain had been conducting in the West. Meanwhile the German High Command had found a new chief. On 28th August the Emperor sent for Hindenburg, and on the following day Falkenhayn resigned. The victor of Tannenberg had never seen eye to eye with the Chief of the General Staff, and might fairly claim the disasters of the summer on the Russian front as proof that he had been in the right. From these disasters had sprung Rumanian intervention, and against Falkenhayn were also debited the costly failure at Verdun, and—what seemed to Germany its consequences—the desperate struggle on the Somme, of which the end could not be foreseen. The crisis demanded a change of authority, and at the helm was placed the old soldier who had the greatest prestige among his countrymen, while beside him was set Ludendorff, who had shown himself the

ablest organizer of campaigns. It was to prove a formidable partnership in the succeeding two years. Falkenhayn, the most intellectual of Germany's commanders, had not the character or temperament for the kind of war which was now forced upon her. A more patient, if a slower, mind, a tougher fortitude, a more desperate laboriousness in the conserving of every atom of national strength, were the gifts demanded; and these, joined with supreme popular confidence, were possessed by the new duumvirate.

CHAPTER LXII.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME.

June 24–September 9, 1916.

The Somme Region—The Strategy and Tactics of the projected Battle—German and Allied Dispositions—The Bombardment—The First Day—The Attack of 14th July—The French Advance—The Crest of the Uplands won.

(*Map*, p. 214.)

I.

From Arras southward the Western battle-front left the coalpits and sour fields of Artois and entered the pleasant region of Picardy. The great crook of the upper Somme and the tributary vale of the Ancre intersect a rolling tableland, dotted with little towns and furrowed by a hundred shallow streams. Nowhere does the land rise higher than 500 feet, but a trivial swell—such is the nature of the landscape—may carry the eye for thirty miles. There were few detached farms, for it was a country of peasant cultivators who clustered in villages. Not a hedge broke the long roll of cornlands, and till the higher ground was reached the lines of tall poplars flanking the great Roman highroads were the chief landmarks. At the lift of country between Somme and Ancre copses patched the slopes, and sometimes a church spire was seen above the trees from some woodland hamlet. The Somme winds in a broad valley between chalk bluffs, faithfully dogged by a canal—a curious river which strains, like the Oxus, "through matted rushy isles," and is sometimes a lake and sometimes an expanse of swamp. The Ancre is such a stream as may be found in Wiltshire, with good trout in its pools. On a hot midsummer day the slopes are ablaze with yellow mustard, red poppies, and blue cornflowers; and to one coming from the lush flats of Flanders, or the "black country" of the Pas de Calais, or the dreary levels of Champagne, or the strange melancholy Verdun hills, this land

wore a habitable and cheerful air, as if remote from the oppression of war.

The district is known as the Santerre. Some derive the name from *sana terra*—the healthy land; others from *sarta terra*—the cleared land. Some say it is *sancta terra*, for Peter the Hermit was a Picard, and the piety of the Crusaders enriched the place with a thousand relics and a hundred noble churches. But there are those—and they have much to say for themselves—who read the name *sang terre*—the bloody land; for the Picard was the Gascon of the north, and the countryside was an old cockpit of war. It was the seat of the government of Clovis and Charlemagne. It was ravaged by the Normans, and time and again by the English. There Louis XI. and Charles the Bold fought their battles; it suffered terribly in the Hundred Years' War; it was the "tawny ground" which Shakespeare's Henry V. discoloured with blood; German and Spaniard, the pandours of Eugene and the Cossacks of Alexander marched across its fields; from the walls of Péronne the last shot was fired in the campaign of 1814. And in the greatest war of all it was destined to be the theatre of a struggle compared with which its ancient conflicts were like the brawls of a village fair.

Till midsummer in 1916 the Picardy front had shown little activity. Since that feverish September when Castelnau had extended on the Allies' left, and Maud'huy beyond Castelnau, in the great race for the North Sea, there had been no serious action. Just before the Battle of Verdun began the Germans made a feint south of the Somme and gained some ground at Frise and Dompierre. There had been local raids and local bombardments, but the trenches on both sides were good, and a partial advance offered few attractions to either. Amiens was miles behind one front, vital points like St. Quentin and Cambrai and La Fère were far behind the other. In that region only a very great and continuous offensive would offer any strategic results. In July 1915 the British took over most of the line from Arras to the Somme, and on the whole they had a quiet winter in their new trenches. This long stagnation led to one result: it enabled the industrious Germans to excavate the chalk hills on which they lay into a fortress which they believed to be impregnable. Their position was naturally strong, and they strengthened it by every device which science could provide. Their High Command might look uneasily at the Aubers ridge and Lens and Vimy, but it had no doubts about the Albert heights.

The German plan in the West, as we have seen, after the first offensive had been checked at the Marne and Ypres, was to hold their front with abundant guns but the bare minimum of men, and use their surplus forces to win a decision in the East. This scheme was foiled by the steadfastness of Russia's retreat, which surrendered territory freely but kept her armies in being. During the winter of 1915–16 the German High Command was growing anxious. It saw that the march to the Dvina and the adventure in the Balkans had failed to shake the resolution of its opponents. It was aware that the Allies had learned with some exactness the lesson of eighteen months of war, and that even now they were superior in men, and would presently be on an equality in munitions. Moreover, the Allied Command was becoming concentrated and shaking itself free from its old passion for divergent operations. Its generals had learned the wisdom of the order of the King of Syria to his captains: "Fight neither with small nor great, but only with the King of Israel;" and the King of Israel did not welcome the prospect. Now, to quote a famous saying of Foch, "A weakening force must always be attacking," and from the beginning of 1916 the Central Powers were forced into a continuous offensive. Their economic strength was draining steadily. Their people had been told that victory was already won, and were asking for the fruits of it. They feared greatly the coming Allied advance, for they knew that it was meant to be simultaneous on all fronts, and they cast about for a means of frustrating it. That was the main reason of the great Verdun assault. Germany hoped so to weaken the field strength of France that no future blow would be possible, and the French nation, weary and dispirited, would incline to peace. She hoped, in any event, to lure the Allies into a premature counter-attack, so that their great offensive might go off at half-cock and be defeated piecemeal.

None of these things happened. Pétain at Verdun, as we know, handled the defence like a master, and the place became a trap where Germany was bleeding to death. Meanwhile, with the full assent of Joffre, the British armies made no movement. They were biding their time. Early in June the Austrian attack on the Trentino had been checked by Italy, and suddenly—in the East—Russia swung forward to a surprising victory. Within a month nearly half a million Austrians had been put out of action, and the distressed armies of the Dual Monarchy called on Germany for help. Falkenhayn grappled as best he could with the situation, and such divisions as could be spared were dispatched from the

West. At this moment, when the grip was tightening in the East, France and Britain made ready for a supreme effort. The plan had been settled between the two commands at Chantilly as early as 14th February.

Germany's position was intricate and uneasy. She had no large surplus of men immediately available at her interior depots. The wounded who were ready again for the line and the young recruits from the 1917 class were all needed to fill up the normal wastage in her ranks. She might create new divisions, but it would be mainly done by skimming the old. She had no longer any great mass of free strategic reserves. Most had been sucked into the maelstrom of Verdun or dispatched east to Hindenburg. In the West she was holding a huge salient—from the North Sea to Soissons, and from Soissons to Verdun. If a wedge were driven in on one side, the whole apex would be in danger. The Russian field army could retire safely from Warsaw and Vilna, because it was mobile and lightly equipped, but an army which had been stationary for eighteen months and had relied mainly upon its fortifications would be apt to find a Sedan in any rapid and extensive retirement. The very strength of the German front in the West constituted its weakness. A breach in a fluid line may be mended, but a breach in a rigid and elaborate front is difficult to fill unless there are large numbers of men available for the task or unlimited time. There were no such large numbers, and it was likely that the Allies would see that there was no superfluity of leisure.

Yet, in spite of some weakness in the strategic situation, the German stronghold in the West was still formidable in the extreme. From Arras southward they held in the main the higher ground. The front consisted of a strong first position, with firing, support, and reserve trenches, and a labyrinth of deep dug-outs; a less strong intermediate line covering the field batteries; and a second position some distance behind, which was of much the same strength as the first. Behind lay fortified woods and villages which could be readily linked up with trench lines to form third and fourth positions. They were well served by the great network of railways which radiated from La Fère and Laon, Cambrai and St. Quentin, and many new light lines had been constructed. They had ample artillery and shells, endless machine guns, and consummate skill in using them. It was a fortress to which no front except the West could show a parallel. The Russian soldiers who in the early summer were brought to France stared with amazement at a ramification of trenches compared with which the lines

in Poland and Galicia were like hurried improvisations. The German purpose in the event of an attack was purely defensive. It was to hold their ground, to maintain the mighty forts on which they had spent so many months of labour, to beat off the assault at whatever cost. In that section of their front, at any rate, they were resolved to be a stone wall and not a spear point.

The aim of the Allied Command must be clearly understood. It was not to recover so many square miles of France; it was not to take Bapaume or Péronne or St. Quentin; it was not even in the strict sense to carry this or that position. All these things were subsidiary and would follow in due course, provided the main purpose succeeded. That purpose was simply to exercise a steady and continued pressure on a certain section of the enemy's front.

For nearly two years the world had been full of theories as to the possibility of breaking the German line. Many months before critics had pointed out the futility of piercing that line on too narrow a front, since all that was produced thereby was an awkward salient. It was clear that any breach must be made on a wide front, which would allow the attacking wedge to manœuvre in the gap, and prevent reinforcements from coming up quickly enough to reconstitute the line behind. But this view took too little account of the strength of the German fortifications. No doubt a breach could be made; but its making would be desperately costly, for no bombardment could destroy all the defensive lines, and infantry in the attack would be somewhere or other faced with unbroken wire and unshaken parapets. Gradually it had been accepted that an attack should proceed by stages, with, as a prelude to each, a complete artillery preparation, and that, since the struggle must be long drawn out, fresh troops should be used at each stage. The policy was that of "limited objectives," but it did not preclude an unlimited objective in the event of some local enemy weakness suddenly declaring itself. These were the tactics of the Germans at Verdun, and they were obviously right. Why, then, did the attack on Verdun fail? In the first place, because after the first week the assault became spasmodic and the great plan fell to pieces. Infantry were used wastefully in hopeless rushes. The pressure was relaxed for days on end, and the defence was allowed to reorganize itself. The second reason, of which the first was a consequence, was that Germany, after the initial onslaught, had not the necessary superiority either in numbers or *moral* or guns. At the Somme the Allies did not intend to relax their pressure, and their strength was such that they believed that,

save in the event of abnormal weather conditions, they could keep it continuously at a high potential.

A strategical problem is not, as a rule, capable of being presented in a simple metaphor, but it may be said that, to the view of the Allied strategy, the huge German salient in the West was like an elastic band drawn very tight. Each part of such a band has lost elasticity, and may be severed by friction which would do little harm to the band if less tautly stretched. That represented one element in the situation. Another aspect might be suggested by the metaphor of a sea-dyke of stone in a flat country where all stone must be imported. The waters crumble the wall in one section, and all free reserves of stone are used to strengthen that part. But the crumbling goes on, and to fill the breach stones are brought from other sections of the dyke. Some day there may come an hour when the sea will wash through the old breach, and a great length of the weakened dyke will follow in the cataclysm.

There were two other motives in the Allied purpose which may be regarded as subsidiary. One was to ease the pressure on Verdun, which during June had grown to fever pitch. The second was to prevent the transference of large bodies of enemy troops from the Western to the Eastern front, a transference which might have worked havoc with Brussilov's plans. Sir Douglas Haig would have preferred to postpone the offensive a little longer, for his numbers and munitionment were still growing, and the training of the new levies was not yet complete. But the general situation demanded that the Allies in the West should not delay their stroke much beyond midsummer.

The German front in the Somme area was held by the right wing of the II. Army, formerly Bülow's, but now under Fritz von Below. This army's area began just south of Monchy, north of which lay the VI. Army under the Bavarian Crown Prince. At the end of June the front between Gommecourt and Frise was held as follows: North of the Ancre lay the 2nd Guard Reserve Division and the 52nd Division. Between the Ancre and the Somme lay two units of the 14th Reserve Corps, in order, the 26th Reserve Division and the 28th Reserve Division, and then the 12th Division of the 6th Reserve Corps. South of the river, guarding the road to Peronne, were the 121st Division, the 11th Division, and the 36th Division, belonging to the 17th Corps.

The British armies, as we have seen in earlier chapters, had in less than two years grown from the six divisions of the old Expeditionary Force to a total of some seventy divisions in the field,

leaving out of account the troops supplied by the Dominions and by India. Behind these divisions were masses of trained men to replace wastage for at least another year. The quality of the result was not less remarkable than the quantity. The efficiency of the supply and transport, the medical services, the aircraft work, was universally admitted. The staff and intelligence work—most difficult to improvise—was now equal to the best in the field. The gunnery was praised by the French, a nation of expert gunners. As for the troops themselves, we had secured a homogeneous army of which it was hard to say that one part was better than the other. By June 1916 the term New Armies was a misnomer. The whole British force in one sense was new. The famous old regiments of the line had been completely renewed since Mons, and their drafts were drawn from the same source as the men of the new battalions. The only difference was that in the historic battalions there was a tradition already existing, whereas in the new battalions that tradition had to be created. And the creation was quick. If the Old Army bore the brunt of the First Battle of Ypres, the Territorials were no less heroic in the Second Battle of Ypres, and the New Army had to its credit the four-mile charge at Loos. It was no patchwork force which in June was drawn up in Picardy, but the flower of the manhood of the British Empire, differing in origin and antecedents, but alike in discipline and courage and resolution.

Munitions had grown with numbers. Any one who was present at Ypres in April and May 1915 saw the German guns all day pounding our lines, with only a feeble and intermittent reply. It was better at Loos in September, when we showed that we could achieve an intense bombardment. But at that date our equipment sufficed only for spasmodic efforts, and not for that sustained and continuous fire which was needed to destroy the enemy's defences. Things were very different in June 1916. Everywhere on the long British front there were British guns—heavy guns of all calibres, field guns innumerable, and in the trenches there were quantities of trench mortars. The great munition dumps, constantly depleted and constantly replenished from distant bases, showed that there was food enough and to spare for this mass of artillery, and in the factories and depots at home every minute saw the reserves growing. We no longer fought against a superior machine. We had created our own machine to nullify the enemy's and allow our man-power to come to grips.

The coming attack was allotted to the Fourth Army, under General Sir Henry Rawlinson, who had begun the campaign in

command of the 7th Division, and at Loos had commanded the 4th Corps. His front ran from south of Gommecourt across the Ancre valley to the junction with the French north of Maricourt. In his line he had five corps—from left to right, the 8th, under Lieutenant-General Sir Aylmer Hunter-Weston—31st, 4th, and 29th Divisions; the 10th, under Lieutenant-General Sir T. L. N. Morland—36th and 32nd Divisions; the 3rd, under Lieutenant-General Sir W. P. Pulteney—8th and 34th Divisions; the 15th, under Lieutenant-General Horne—21st and 7th Divisions; and the 13th, under Lieutenant-General Congreve, V.C.—18th and 30th Divisions. A subsidiary attack on the extreme left at Gommecourt was to be made by Allenby's Third Army—the 7th Corps, under Sir T. Snow, containing the 46th and 56th Divisions. Behind in the back areas lay the nucleus of another army, called first the Reserve, and afterwards the Fifth, under General Sir Hubert Gough, which at this time was mainly composed of cavalry divisions. It was a cadre which would receive its complement of infantry when the occasion arose.

The French striking force lay from Maricourt astride the Somme to opposite the village of Fay. It was the Sixth Army, once Castelnau's, and now under General Fayolle, one of the most distinguished of French artillerymen. Verdun had made impossible the array of thirty-nine divisions which Foch had contemplated, and Fayolle mustered only sixteen, including the three divisions of the famous 20th Corps. Pétain's wise plan of allowing no formation to be used up now received ample justification. The units allotted to the new offensive were all troops who had seen hard fighting, but the edge of their temper was undulled. South of Fayolle lay the Tenth Army, once d'Urbal's, but now commanded by General Micheler. Its part for the present was to wait; its turn would come when the time arrived to broaden the front of assault.

II.

About the middle of June on the whole front held by the British, and on the French front north and south of the Somme, there began an intermittent bombardment of the German lines. There were raids at different places, partly to mislead the enemy as to the real point of assault, and partly to identify the German units opposed to us. During these days, too, there were many fights in the air. It was essential to prevent German airplanes

from crossing our front and observing our preparations. Our own machines scouted far into the enemy hinterland, reconnoitring and destroying. On Saturday, 24th June, the bombardment became intenser. It fell everywhere on the front; German trenches were obliterated at Ypres and Arras as well as at Beaumont Hamel and Fricourt. There is nothing harder to measure than the relative force of such a "preparation," but had a dispassionate observer been seated in the clouds he would have noted that from Gommecourt to a mile or two south of the Somme the Allied fire was especially methodical and persistent. On Wednesday, 28th June, from any artillery observation post in that region it seemed as if a complete devastation had been achieved. Some things like broken telegraph poles were all that remained of what, a week before, had been leafy copses. Villages had become heaps of rubble. Travelling at night on the roads behind the front from Béthune to Amiens, the whole eastern sky was lit up with what seemed fitful summer lightning. But there was curiously little noise. In Amiens, a score or so of miles from the firing-line, the guns were rarely heard, whereas fifty miles from Ypres they sounded like a roll of drums and woke a man in the night. The configuration of that part of Picardy muffles sound, and the country folk call it the Silent Land.

All the last week of June the weather was grey and cloudy, with a thick fog on the uplands, which made air work unsatisfactory. There were flying showers of rain and the roads were deep in mire. At the front—through the haze—the guns flashed incessantly; troops were everywhere on the move, and the shifting of ammunition dumps nearer to the firing-line foretold what was coming; there was a curious exhilaration, too, for men felt that the great offensive had arrived, that this was no flash in the pan, but a movement conceived on the grand scale as to guns and men which would not cease until a decision was reached. But, as the hours passed in mist and wet, it seemed as if the fates were unpropitious. Then, on the last afternoon of June, there came a sudden change. The pall of cloud cleared away and all Picardy swam in the translucent blue of a summer evening. That night the orders went out. The attack was to be delivered next morning three hours after dawn.

The first day of July dawned hot and cloudless, though a thin fog, the relic of the damp of the past week, clung to the hollows. At half-past five the hill just west of Albert offered a singular view. It was almost in the centre of the section allotted to the Allied

attack, and from it the eye could range on the left up and beyond the Ancre glen to the high ground around Beaumont Hamel and Serre; in front to the great lift of tableland behind which lay Bapaume; and to the right past the woods of Fricourt to the valley of the Somme. Every slope to the east was wreathed in smoke, which blew aside now and then and revealed a patch of wood or a church spire. In the foreground lay Albert, the target of an occasional German shell, with its shattered Church of Notre Dame de Bebrières and the famous gilt Virgin hanging head downward from the campanile. All along the Allied front, a couple of miles behind the line, captive kite balloons glittered in the sunlight. Every gun on a front of twenty-five miles was speaking, and speaking without pause. In that week's bombardment more light and medium ammunition was expended than the total amount manufactured in Britain during the first eleven months of war, while the heavy stuff produced during the same period would not have kept our guns going for a single day. Great spurts of dust on the slopes showed where a heavy shell had burst, and black and white gouts of smoke dotted the middle distance like the little fires in a French autumn field. Lace-like shrapnel wreaths hung in the sky, melting into the morning haze. The noise was strangely uniform, a steady rumbling, as if the solid earth were muttering in a nightmare, and it was hard to distinguish the deep tones of the heavies, the vicious whip-like crack of the field guns, and the bark of the trench mortars.

About 7.15 the bombardment rose to that hurricane pitch of fury which betokened its close. It was as if titanic machine guns were at work round all the horizon. Then appeared a marvellous sight, the solid spouting of the enemy slopes—as if they were lines of reefs on which a strong tide was breaking. In such a hell it seemed that no human thing could live. Through the thin summer vapour and the thicker smoke which clung to the foreground there were visions of a countryside actually moving—moving bodily in debris into the air. And now there was a fresh sound—a series of abrupt and rapid bursts which came gustily from the first lines. These were the new Stokes trench mortars—wonderful little engines of death. There was another sound, too, from the north, as if the cannonading had suddenly come nearer. It looked as if the Germans had begun a counter-bombardment on part of the British front line.

The staff officers glanced at their watches, and at half-past seven precisely there came a lull. It lasted for a second or two,

and then the guns continued their tale. But the range had been lengthened everywhere, and from a bombardment the fire had become a barrage. For, on a twenty-five mile front, the Allied infantry had crossed the parapets.

III.

The point of view of the hill-top was not that of the men in the front trenches. The crossing of the parapets was the supreme moment in modern war. The troops were outside defences, moving across the open to investigate the unknown. It was the culmination of months of training for officers and men, and the least sensitive felt the drama of the crisis. It was the first great action fought by the New Armies of Britain in their full strength. Most of the troops engaged had twenty months before been employed in peaceable civilian trades. In their ranks were every class and condition—miners from north England, factory hands from the industrial centres, clerks and shop-boys, ploughmen and shepherds, Saxon and Celt, college graduates and dock labourers, men who in the wild places of the earth had often faced danger, and men whose chief adventure had been a Sunday bicycle ride. Nerves may be attuned to the normal risks of trench warfare and yet shrink from the desperate hazard of a charge into the enemy's line. But to one who visited the front before the attack the most vivid impression was that of quiet cheerfulness. There were few shirkers and not many who wished themselves elsewhere. One man's imagination might be more active than another's, but the will to fight, and to fight desperately, was universal. With the happy gift of the British soldier they had turned the ghastly business of war into something homely and familiar. Accordingly they took everything as part of the day's work, and awaited the supreme moment without heroics and without tremor, confident in themselves, confident in their guns, and confident in the triumph of their cause. There was no savage lust of battle, but that far more formidable thing—a resolution which needed no rhetoric to support it. Norfolk's words were true of every man of them—

> "As gentle and as jocund as to jest
> Go I to fight. Truth hath a quiet breast."

The British aim in this, the opening stage of the battle, was the German first position. In the section of assault, running from north to south, it covered Gommecourt, passed east of Hébuterne,

followed the high ground in front of Serre and Beaumont Hamel, and crossed the Ancre a little to the north-west of Thiepval. It ran in front of Thiepval, which was strongly fortified, east of Authuille, and just covered the hamlets of Ovillers and La Boisselle. There it ran about a mile and a quarter east of Albert. It then passed south round the woodland village of Fricourt, where it turned at right angles to the east, covering Mametz and Montauban. Half-way between Maricourt and Hardecourt it turned south again, covered Curlu, crossed the Somme at the wide marsh near the place called Vaux, covered Frise and Dompierre and Soyecourt, and passed just east of Lihons, where it left the sector with which we are now concerned. In the British area the main assault was to be delivered between Maricourt and the Ancre; the attack from that river to Gommecourt was meant to be subsidiary.

It is clear that the Germans expected the movement of the Allies, and had made a fairly accurate guess as to its terrain. They assumed that the area would be from Arras to Albert. In all that stretch they were ready with a full concentration of men and guns. South of Albert they were less prepared, and south of the Somme they were caught napping. The history of the first day was therefore the story of two separate actions in the north and south, in the first of which the Allies failed and in the second of which they brilliantly succeeded. By the evening the first action had definitely closed, and the weight of the Allies was flung wholly into the second. That is almost inevitable in an attack on a very broad front. Some part will be found tougher than the rest, and that part having been tried will be relinquished; but it is the stubbornness of the knot and the failure to take it which are the price of success elsewhere. Let us first tell the tale of the desperate struggle between Gommecourt and Thiepval.

The divisions in action there had to face a chain of fortified villages—Gommecourt, Serre, Beaumont Hamel, and Thiepval—and enemy positions which were generally on higher and better ground. The Ancre cut the line in two, with steep slopes rising from the valley bottom. Each village had been so fortified as to be almost impregnable, with a maze of catacombs, often two stories deep, where whole battalions could take refuge, underground passages from the firing-line to sheltered places in the rear, and pits into which machine guns could be lowered during a bombardment. On the plateau behind, with excellent direct observation, the Germans had their guns massed.

It was this direct observation and the deep shelters for machine guns which were the undoing of the British attack from Gommecourt to Thiepval. As our bombardment grew more intense on the morning of 1st July, so did the enemy's. Before we could go over the parapets the Germans had plastered our front trenches with high explosives, and in many places blotted them out. All along our line, fifty yards before and behind the first trench, they dropped 6-inch and 8-inch high-explosive shells. The result was that our men, instead of forming up in the front trench, were compelled to form up in the open ground behind, for the front trench had disappeared. In addition to this there was an intense shrapnel barrage, which must have been directed by observers, for it followed our troops as they moved forward.

As our men began to cross no-man's-land, the Germans seemed to man their ruined parapets, and fired rapidly with automatic rifles and machine guns. They had special light *musketon* battalions, armed with machine guns and automatic rifles, who showed marvellous intrepidity, some even pushing their guns into no-man's-land to enfilade our advance. Moreover, they had machine-gun pits far in front of their parapets, connected with their trenches by deep tunnels secure from shell fire. The British moved forward in line after line, dressed as if on parade; not a man wavered or broke rank; but minute by minute the ordered lines melted away under the deluge of high-explosive, shrapnel, rifle, and machine-gun fire. There was no question about the German weight of artillery. From dawn till long after noon they maintained this steady drenching fire. Gallant individuals or isolated detachments managed here and there to break into the enemy position, and some even penetrated well behind it; but these were episodes, and the ground they won could not be held. By the evening, from Gommecourt to Thiepval, the attack had been everywhere checked, and our troops—what was left of them—were back again in their old line. They had struck the core of the main German defence.

In that stubborn action against impossible odds the gallantry was so universal and absolute that it is idle to select special cases. In each mile there were men who performed the incredible. Nearly every English, Scots, and Irish regiment was represented, as well as Midland and London Territorials, a gallant little company of Rhodesians, and a Newfoundland battalion drawn from the hard-bitten fishermen of that iron coast, who lost terribly on the slopes of Beaumont Hamel. Repeatedly the German position was pierced.

At Serre fragments of two battalions pushed as far as Pendant Copse, 2,000 yards from the British lines. Troops of the 29th Division broke through south of Beaumont Hamel, and got to the Station Road beyond the Quarry, but few ever returned. One Scottish battalion entered Thiepval village. North of Thiepval the Ulster Division broke through the enemy trenches, passed the crest of the ridge, and reached the point called The Crucifix, in rear of the first German position. For a little they held the strong Schwaben Redoubt, which we were not to enter again till after three months of battle, and some even got into the outskirts of Grandcourt. It was the anniversary day of the Battle of the Boyne, and that charge when the men shouted " Remember the Boyne," will be for ever a glorious page in the annals of Ulster. The splendid troops, drawn from those volunteers who had banded themselves together to defend their own freedom, now shed their blood like water for the liberty of the world.

That grim struggle from Thiepval northward was responsible for by far the greater number of the Allied losses of the day. But though costly it was not fruitless, for it occupied the bulk of the German defence. It was the price which had to be paid for the advance on the rest of the front. For while in the north the living wave broke vainly and gained little, in the south " by creeks and inlets making " the tide was flowing strongly shoreward.

The map will show that Fricourt formed a bold salient; and it was the Allied purpose not to assault this salient but to cut it off. An advance on Ovillers and La Boisselle and up the long shallow depression towards Contalmaison, which our men called Sausage Valley, would, if united with the carrying of Mametz, pinch it so tightly that it must fall. Ovillers and La Boisselle were strongly fortified villages, and on this first day, while we won the outskirts and carried the entrenchments before them, we did not control the ruins which our guns had pounded out of the shape of habitable dwellings, though elements of one brigade actually penetrated into La Boisselle and held a portion of the village.

Just west of Fricourt the 21st Division was engaged, the division which had suffered grave misfortunes at Loos. That day it recovered its own, and proved once again that an enemy can meet no more formidable foes than British troops which have a score to wipe off. It made no mistake, but poured resolutely into the angle east of Sausage Valley, carrying Lozenge Wood and Round Wood, and driving in a deep wedge north of Fricourt. Before evening

Mametz fell. Its church stood up, a broken tooth of masonry among the shattered houses, with an amphitheatre of splintered woods behind and around it. South of it ran a high road, and south of the road lay a little hill, with the German trench lines on the southern side. Opposite Mametz our assembly trenches had been destroyed by the enemy's fire, so that the attacking infantry had to advance over 400 yards of open ground. The 7th Division which took the place was one of the most renowned in the British Army. It had fought at First Ypres, at Festubert, and at Loos. Since the autumn of 1914 it had been changed in its composition, but there were in it battalions which had been for twenty months in the field. The whole division, old and new alike, went forward to their task as if it were their first day of war. On the slopes of the little hill three battalions advanced in line—one from a southern English county, one from a northern city, one of Highland regulars. They carried everything before them, and to one who followed their track the regularity of their advance was astonishing, for the dead lay aligned as if on some parade.

Montauban fell early in the day to the 30th Division. The British lines lay in the hollow north of the Albert–Péronne road, where stood the hamlet of Carnoy. On the crest of the ridge beyond lay Montauban, now, like most Santerre villages, a few broken walls set among splintered trees. The brickfields on the right were expected to be the scene of a fierce struggle, but, to our amazement, they had been so shattered by our guns that they were taken easily. The Montauban attack was perhaps the most perfect of the episodes of the day. The artillery had done its work, and the 6th Bavarian Regiment opposed to us lost 3,000 out of a total strength of 3,500. At that point was seen a sight hitherto unwitnessed in the campaign—the advance in line of the troops of Britain and France. On the British right lay the 20th Corps—the corps which had held the Grand Couronné of Nancy in the feverish days of the Marne battle, and which by its counter-attack at Douaumont on that snowy 26th of February had turned the tide at Verdun. It was the 39th Division, under General Nourrisson, which moved in line with the British—horizon-blue beside khaki, and behind both the comforting bark of the "75's."

From the point of junction with the British for eight miles southward the French advanced with lightning speed and complete success. From Maricourt to the Somme the country was still upland, but lower than the region to the north. South of the marshy Somme valley an undulating plain stretched east to the

great crook of the river beyond which lay Péronne, a fortress girdled by its moat of three streams. Foch had planned his advance on the same lines as the British, the same methodical preparation, the same limited objective for each stage. North of the Somme there was a stiff fight on the Albert–Péronne road, at the cliff abutting on the river called the "Gendarme's Hat," and in front of the villages of Curlu and Hardecourt. Of these on that first day of July the French reached the outskirts, as we reached the outskirts of Fricourt and La Boisselle, but had to postpone their capture till the morrow. South of the river the Colonial Corps, whose attack did not begin till 9.30 a.m., took the enemy completely by surprise. Officers were captured shaving in their dug-outs, whole battalions were rounded up, and all was done with the minimum of loss. One French regiment had two casualties; 800 was the total of one division. Long ere evening the villages of Dompierre, Becquincourt, and Bussu were in their hands, and five miles had been bitten out of the German front. Fay was taken the same day by the French 35th Corps. Between them the Allies in twelve hours had captured the enemy first position in its entirety from Mametz to Fay, a front of fourteen miles. Some 6,000 prisoners were in their hands, and a great quantity of guns and stores. In the powdered trenches, in the woods and valleys behind, and in the labyrinths of ruined dwellings, the German dead lay thick. "That is the purpose of the battle," said a French officer. "We do not want guns, for Krupp can make them faster than we can take them. But Krupp cannot make men."

Sunday, the 2nd of July, was a day of level heat, when the dust stood in steady walls on every road behind the front and in the tortured areas of the captured ground. The success of the Saturday had, as we have seen, put the British right wing well in advance of their centre, and it was necessary to bring forward the left part of the line from Thiepval to Fricourt so as to make the breach in the German position uniform over a broad enough front. The extreme British left was now inactive. A new attack in the circumstances would have given no results, and the Ulster Division—what remained of its advanced guard—fell back from the Schwaben Redoubt to its original line. The front was rapidly getting too large and intricate for any single army commander to handle, so it was resolved to give the terrain north of the Albert–Bapaume road, including the area of the 4th and 8th Corps, to the Reserve or Fifth Army, under Sir Hubert Gough.

All that day a fierce struggle was waged by the British 3rd

Corps at Ovillers and La Boisselle. Two new divisions—the 12th and the 19th—had entered the line. At Ovillers the 12th carried the entrenchments before it, and late in the evening the 19th succeeded in entering the labyrinth of cellars, the ruins of what had been La Boisselle. The 34th Division on their right, pushing across Sausage Valley, came to the skirts of the Round Wood. As yet there was no counter-attack. The surprise in the south had been too great, and the Germans had not yet brought up their reserve divisions. All that day squadrons of Allied aeroplanes bombed depots and lines of communications in the German hinterland. The long echelons of the Allied "sausages" glittered in the sun, but only one German kite balloon could be detected. We had found a way—the Verdun way—of bombing those fragile gas-bags and turning them into wisps of flame. The Fokkers strove in vain to check our airmen, and at least two were brought crashing to the earth.

At noon on Sunday Fricourt fell; the taking of Mametz and the positions won in the Fricourt Wood to the east had made its capture certain. The 21st Division took Round Wood; the 17th, brought up from corps reserve, attacked across the Fricourt–Contalmaison road; and the 7th carried the village. During the night part of the garrison had slipped out, but when our men entered it, bombing from house to house, they made a great haul of prisoners and guns. Early that morning the Germans had counter-attacked at Montauban, and been easily repulsed, and during the day our patrols were pushed east into Bernafay Wood. Farther south the French continued their victorious progress. They destroyed a German counter-attack on the new position at Hardecourt; they took Curlu; and south of the river they took Frise and the wood of Méreaucourt beyond it, and the strongly fortified village of Herbecourt. They did more, for at many points between the river and Assevillers they broke into the German second position. Fayolle's left now commanded the light railway from Combles to Péronne, his centre held the big loop of the Somme at Frise, and his right was only four miles from Péronne itself.

On Monday, 3rd July, Fritz von Below issued an order to his troops, which showed that he had no delusion as to the gravity of the Allied offensive. "The decisive issue of the war," he said, "depends on the victory of the II. Army on the Somme. . . . The important ground lost in certain places will be recaptured by our attack after the arrival of reinforcements. The vital thing is to hold on to our present positions at all costs and to improve them.

I forbid the voluntary evacuation of trenches." He had correctly estimated the position. The old ground, with all it held, must be rewon if possible; no more must be lost; fresh lines must be constructed in the rear. But the new improvised lines could be no equivalent of those mighty fastnesses which represented the work of eighteen months; therefore those fastnesses must be regained. We shall learn how ill his enterprise prospered.

For a correct understanding of the position on Monday, 3rd July, it is necessary to recall the exact alignment of the new British front. It fell into two sections. The first lay from Thiepval to Fricourt, and was bisected by the Albert–Bapaume road, which ran like an arrow over the watershed. Here Thiepval, Ovillers, and La Boisselle were positions in the German first line. Contalmaison, to the east of La Boisselle, was a strongly fortified village on high ground, which formed, so to speak, a pivot in the German intermediate line—the line which covered their field guns. The second position ran through Pozières to the two Bazentins and on to Guillemont. On the morning of 3rd July the British had not got Thiepval nor Ovillers; they had only a portion of La Boisselle; but south of it they had broken through the first position and were well on the road to Contalmaison. All this northern section consisted of bare undulating slopes—once covered with crops, but now powdered and bare like some alkali desert. Everywhere it was seamed with the scars of trenches and pock-marked with shell-holes. The few trees lining the roads had been long razed, and the only vegetation was coarse grass, thistles, and the ubiquitous poppy and mustard. The southern section, from Fricourt to Montauban, was of a different character. It was patched with large woods, curiously clean cut like the copses in the park of a country house. A line of them ran from Fricourt north-eastward —Fricourt Wood, Bottom Wood, the big wood of Mametz, the woods of Bazentin, and the wood of Foureaux, which our men called High Wood; while from Montauban ran a second line, the woods of Bernafay and Trônes, and Delville Wood around Longueval. Here all the German first position had been captured. The second position ran through the Bazentins, Longueval, and Guillemont, but to reach it some difficult woodland country had to be traversed. On 3rd July, therefore, the southern half of the British line was advancing against the enemy's second position, while the northern half had still for its objective Ovillers and La Boisselle in the first position, and the intermediate point Contalmaison.

It will be convenient to take the two sections separately, since

their problems were different, and see the progress of the British advance in each, preparatory to the assault on the enemy's second line. In the north our task was to carry the three fortified places, Ovillers, La Boisselle, and Contalmaison, which were on a large scale the equivalent of the *fortins*, manned by machine guns, which we had known to our cost at Festubert and Loos. The German troops in this area obeyed to the full Below's instructions, and fought hard for every acre. On the night of Sunday, 2nd July, La Boisselle was penetrated, and all Monday the struggle swayed around that village and Ovillers. La Boisselle lay on the right of the highroad; Ovillers was to the north and a little to the east, separated by a dry hollow which we called Mash Valley. On Monday the 12th Division attacked south of Thiepval, but failed to advance, largely because its left flank was unsupported. All night the struggle see-sawed, our troops winning ground and the Germans winning back small portions. On Tuesday, the 4th, the heat wave broke in thunderstorms and torrential rain, and the dusty hollows became quagmires. Next morning La Boisselle was finally carried, after one of the bloodiest contests of the battle, and the attack was carried forwards toward Bailiff Wood and Contalmaison.

That day, Wednesday, the 5th, we attacked the main defences of Contalmaison from the west. On Friday, 7th July, came the first big attack on Contalmaison from Sausage Valley on the south-west, and from the tangle of copses north-east of Fricourt, through which ran the Fricourt–Contalmaison highroad. On the latter side good work had already been done, the enemy *fortins* at Birch Tree Wood and Shelter Wood and the work called the Quadrangle having been taken on 3rd July, along with 1,100 prisoners. On the Friday the attack ranged from the Leipzig Redoubt, south of Thiepval, and the environs of Ovillers to the skirts of Contalmaison. About noon the infantry of the 19th Division, after carrying Bailiff Wood, took Contalmaison by storm, releasing a small party of Northumberland Fusiliers, who had been made prisoners four days earlier. The 3rd Guard Division—the famous "Cockchafers"—were now our opponents. They were heavily punished, and 700 of them fell as prisoners into our hands. But our success at Contalmaison was beyond our strength to maintain, and in the afternoon a counter-attack forced us out of the village. That same day the 12th and the 25th Divisions had pushed their front nearly half a mile along the Bapaume road, east of La Boisselle, and taken most of the Leipzig Redoubt.

Ovillers was now in danger of envelopment. One brigade had attacked in front, and another, pressing in on the north-east flank, was cutting the position in two. All that day there was a deluge of rain, and the sodden ground and flooded trenches crippled the movement of our men.

Next day the struggle for Ovillers continued. The place was now a mass of battered trenches, rubble, and muddy shell-holes, and every yard had to be fought for. We were also slowly consolidating our ground around Contalmaison, and driving the Germans from their strongholds in the little copses. Ever since 7th July we had held the southern corner of the village. On the night of Monday, the 10th, pushing from Bailiff Wood on the west side in four successive waves, with the guns lifting the range in front of them, a brigade of the 23rd Division broke into the north-west corner, swept round on the north, and after bitter hand-to-hand fighting conquered the whole village. As for Ovillers, it was now surrounded and beyond succour, and it was only a question of days till its stubborn garrison must yield. It did not actually fall till Sunday, 16th July, when the gallant remnant—two officers and 124 Guardsmen—surrendered to the 25th Division. By that time our main battle had swept far to the eastward.

To turn to the southern sector, where the problem was to clear out the fortified woods which intervened between us and the German second line. From the crest of the first ridge behind Fricourt and Montauban one looked into a shallow trough, called Caterpillar Valley, beyond which the ground rose to the Bazentin–Longueval line. On the left, toward Contalmaison, was the big Mametz Wood; to the right, beyond Montauban, the pear-shaped woods of Bernafay and Trônes. On Monday, the 3rd, the ground east of Fricourt Wood was cleared, and the approaches to Mametz Wood won. That day a German counter-attack developed. A fresh division arrived at Montauban, which was faithfully handled by our guns. The "milking of the line" had begun, for a battalion from the Champagne front appeared east of Mametz early on Monday morning. Within a very short time of detraining at railhead the whole battalion had been destroyed or made prisoners. In one small area over a thousand men were taken.

Next day, Tuesday, 4th July, we had entered the Wood of Mametz, 3,000 yards north of Mametz village, and had taken the Wood of Bernafay. These intermediate positions were not acquired without a grim struggle. The woods were thick with undergrowth which had not been cut for two seasons, and though our artillery

played havoc with the trees it could not clear away the tangled shrubbery beneath them. The Germans had filled the place with machine-gun redoubts, connected by concealed trenches, and in some cases they had machine guns in positions in the trees. Each step in our advance had to be fought for, and in that briery labyrinth the battle tended always to become a series of individual combats. Every position we won was subjected at once to a heavy counter-bombardment. During the first two days of July it was possible to move in moderate safety almost up to the British firing-lines, but from the 4th onward the enemy kept up a steady bombardment of our whole new front, and barraged heavily in all the hinterland around Fricourt, Mametz, and Montauban.

On Saturday, 8th July, the 30th Division made a lodgment in the Wood of Trônes, assisted by the flanking fire of the French guns. On that day the French on our right were advancing towards Maltzhorn Farm. For the next five days Trônes Wood was the hottest corner in the southern British sector. Its peculiar situation gave every chance to the defence. There was only one covered approach to it from the west—by way of the trench called Trônes Alley. The southern part was commanded by the Maltzhorn ridge, and the northern by the German position at Longueval. Around the wood to north and east the enemy second line lay in a half-moon, so that they could concentrate upon it a converging artillery fire, and could feed their own garrison in the place with reserves at their pleasure. Finally, the denseness of the covert, cut only by the railway clearings and the German communication trenches, made organized movement impossible. It was not till our pressure elsewhere diverted the German artillery fire that the wood as a whole could be won. Slowly and stubbornly we pushed our way northwards from our point of lodgment in the southern end. Six counter-attacks were launched against us on Sunday night and Monday, and on Monday afternoon the sixth succeeded in winning back some of the wood. These desperate efforts exactly suited our purpose, for the German losses under our artillery fire were enormous. The fighting was continued on Tuesday, when we recaptured the whole of the wood except the extreme northern corner. That same day we approached the north end of Mametz Wood. The difficulty of the fighting and the strength of the defence may be realized from the fact that the taking of a few hundred yards or so of woodland meant invariably the capture of several hundred prisoners.

By Wednesday evening, 12th July, the 21st Division had taken

virtually the whole of Mametz Wood. Its two hundred odd acres, interlaced with barbed wire, honeycombed with trenches, and bristling with machine guns, had given us a tough struggle, especially the last strip on the north side, where the German machine-gun positions enfiladed every advance. Next day we cleared this corner and broke out of the wood, and were face to face at last with the main German second position. Meantime the Wood of Trônes had become a Tom Tiddler's Ground, which neither antagonist could fully claim or use as a base. It was at the mercy of the artillery fire of both sides, and it was impossible in the time to construct shell-proof defences.

In the French sector the advance had been swift and continuous. The attack, as we have seen, was a complete surprise; for, half an hour before it began on 1st July, an order was issued to the German troops, predicting the imminent fall of Verdun, and announcing that a French offensive elsewhere had thereby been prevented. On the nine-mile front from Maricourt to Estrées the German first position had been carried the first day. The heavy guns, when they had sufficiently pounded it, ceased their fire; then the "75's" took up the tale and plastered the front and communication trenches with shrapnel; then a skirmishing line advanced to report the damage done; and finally the infantry moved forward to an easy occupation. It had been the German method at Verdun; but it was practised by the French with far greater precision, and with better fighting material.

On Monday, 3rd July, they had broken into the German second position south of the Somme. Twelve German battalions were hurried up from the Aisne, only to be destroyed. By the next day the Foreign Legion in the Colonial Corps had taken Belloy-en-Santerre, a point in the third line. On Wednesday the 35th Corps had the better part of Estrées, and were within three miles of Péronne. Counter-attacks by the German 17th Division, which had been brought up in support, achieved nothing, and the German railhead was moved from Péronne to Chaulnes. On the night of Sunday, 9th July, Fayolle took Biaches, a mile from Péronne, and the high ground called La Maisonnette, and held a front from there to north of Barleux—a position beyond the German third line. There was now nothing in front of him in this section except the line of the upper Somme. This was south of the river. North of it he had attained points in the second line, but had not yet carried it wholly from Hem northwards.

The deep and broad wedge which their centre had driven towards

Péronne gave the French positions for a flanking fire on the enemy ground on the left. Their artillery, even the heavies, was now far forward in the open, and old peasants beyond the Somme, waiting patiently in their captivity, heard the guns of their countrymen sounding daily nearer. In less than a fortnight Fayolle had, on a front ten miles long, with a maximum depth of six and a half miles, carried 50 square miles of fortifications, and captured 85 guns, vast quantities of war material, 236 officers, and 12,000 men.

The next step was for the British to attack the enemy second position before them. It ran, as we have seen, from Pozières through the Bazentins and Longueval to Guillemont. On Thursday, 13th July, we were in a condition to begin the next stage of our advance. The capture of Contalmaison had been the indispensable preliminary, and immediately following its fall Sir Douglas Haig issued his first summary: "After ten days and nights of continuous fighting, our troops have completed the methodical capture of the whole of the enemy's first system of defence on a front of 14,000 yards. This system of defence consisted of numerous and continuous lines of fire trenches, extending to various depths of from 2,000 to 4,000 yards, and included five strongly fortified villages, numerous heavily wired and entrenched woods, and a large number of immensely strong redoubts. The capture of each of these trenches represented an operation of some importance, and the whole of them are now in our hands." The summary did not err from overstatement. If the northern part of our front, from Thiepval to Gommecourt, had not succeeded, the southern part had steadily bitten its way into as strong a position as any area of the campaign could show. The Allies had already attracted against them the bulk of the available German reserves, and had largely destroyed them. The strength of their plan lay in its deliberateness and the mathematical sequence of its stages.

IV.

At dawn on Friday, the 14th, began the second stage of the battle.

The most methodical action has its gambling element, its moments when a risk must be boldly taken. Without such hazards there can be no chance of surprise. The British attack of 14th July had much of this calculated audacity. In certain parts—as at Contalmaison Villa and Mametz Wood—we held positions within a few hundred yards of the enemy's line. But in the sec-

tion from Bazentin-le-Grand to Longueval there was a long advance —in some places almost a mile—before us up the slopes north of Caterpillar Valley. On the extreme right the Wood of Trônes gave us a somewhat indifferent place of assembly. "The decision," wrote Sir Douglas Haig, "to attempt a night attack of this magnitude with an army, the bulk of which had been raised since the beginning of the war, was perhaps the highest tribute that could be paid to the quality of our troops." The difficulties before the British attack were so great that more than one distinguished French officer doubted its possibility.

The day of the attack was of fortunate omen, for the 14th of July was the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille, the fête-day of France. In Paris there was such a parade as that city had not seen in its long history—a procession of Allied troops, Belgians, Russians, British infantry, and last of all, the blue-coated heroes of France's incomparable line. It was a shining proof to the world of the unity of the Alliance. And on the same day, while the Paris crowd was cheering the Scottish pipers as they swung down the boulevards, the British troops in Picardy were breaking through the German line, crying *Vive la France!* in all varieties of accent. It was France's Day in the eyes of every soldier, the sacred day of that people whom in farm and village and trench they had come to reverence and love.

The front chosen for attack was from a point south-east of Pozières to Longueval and Delville Wood, a space of some four miles. Incidentally, it was necessary for our right flank to clear the Wood of Trônes. Each village in the second line had its adjacent or enfolding wood—Bazentin-le-Petit, Bazentin-le-Grand, and at Longueval the big Wood of Delville. In the centre, a mile and more beyond the German position, the Wood of Foureaux, which we called High Wood, hung like a dark cloud on the sky line.

The British plan was for the 3rd Corps on the left to form a defensive flank, pushing out patrols in the direction of Pozières. On its right the 15th Corps moved against Bazentin-le-Petit Wood and village, and the slopes leading up to High Wood. On their right, again, the 13th Corps was to take Bazentin-le-Grand, to carry Longueval and Delville Wood, and to clear Trônes Wood and form a defensive flank. In the event of a rapid success the occasion might arise for the use of cavalry, so cavalry divisions were put under the orders of the two corps. The preceding bombardment was to be assisted by the French heavy guns firing on Ginchy, Guillemont, and Leuze and Bouleaux Woods. In order to distract

the enemy, the 8th Corps north of the Ancre attacked with gas and smoke, as if there was to be the main area of our effort.

At 3.25 a.m., when the cloudy dawn had fully come, the infantry attacked. So complete was the surprise that in the dark the battalions which had the farthest road to go came within 200 yards of the enemy's wire with scarcely a casualty. When the German barrage came it fell behind them. The attack failed nowhere. In some parts it was slower than others—where the enemy's defence had been less comprehensively destroyed; but by the afternoon all our tasks had been accomplished. To take one instance. The two attacking brigades of the 3rd Division were each composed of two battalions of the New Army and two of the old Regulars. The general commanding put the four new battalions into the first line. The experiment proved the worth of the new troops, for a little after midday their work was done, their part of the German second line was taken, and 662 unwounded men, 36 officers (including a battalion commander), 4 howitzers, 4 field guns, and 14 machine guns were in their hands. The 21st Division had Bazentin-le-Petit Wood and village, and the 7th was far up the slopes towards High Wood, after taking Bazentin-le-Grand Wood; the 3rd Division had Bazentin-le-Grand, and the 9th had all but a small part of Longueval. Trônes Wood had been cleared, and a line was held eastward to Maltzhorn Farm. By the evening we had the whole second line from Bazentin-le-Petit to Longueval, a front of over three miles, and in the twenty-four hours' battle we took over 2,000 prisoners, many of them of the 3rd Division of the German Guard. The audacious enterprise had been crowned with a miraculous success.

The great event of the day fell in the late afternoon. The 7th Division, pushing northward against the 10th Bavarian Division, penetrated the enemy's third position at High Wood, having their flank supported by cavalry. It was 6.15 when the advance was made, the first in eighteen months which had seen the use of our mounted men. In the Champagne battle of 25th September, the French had used some squadrons of General Baratier's Colonial Horse in the ground between the first and second German lines to sweep up prisoners and capture guns. This tactical expedient was now followed by the British, with the difference that in Champagne the fortified second line had not been taken, while in Picardy we were through the two main fortifications and operating against a more or less improvised position. The cavalry used were a troop of the 7th Dragoon Guards and a troop of the Deccan Horse.

They made their way up the shallow valley beyond Bazentin-le-Grand, finding cover in the slope of the ground and the growing corn. The final advance, about 8 p.m., was made partly on foot and partly on horseback, and the enemy in the corn were ridden down, captured, or slain with lance and sabre. The cavalry then set to work to entrench themselves, to protect the flank of the advancing infantry in High Wood. It was a clean and workmanlike job, and the news of it exhilarated the whole line. That cavalry should be used at all seemed to forecast the end of the long trench fighting and the beginning of a campaign in the open.

On Saturday, 15th July, we were busy consolidating the ground won, and at some points pushing farther. Our aircraft, in spite of the haze, were never idle, and in twenty-four hours they destroyed four Fokkers, three biplanes, and a double-engined plane, without the loss of a single machine. On the left the 19th Division fought its way to the skirts of Pozières, attacked the Leipzig Redoubt, south of Thiepval, and continued the struggle for Ovillers. The 23rd Division advanced against the new switch line by which the Germans had connected the uncaptured portion of the second position with their third. The 7th Division lost most of High Wood under the pressure of counter-attacks by the German 7th Division, and next day we withdrew all troops from the place. They had done their work, and had formed a screen behind which we had consolidated our line.

On the right, around Longueval and Delville Wood, was being waged the fiercest contest of all. The position there was now an awkward salient, for our front ran on one side westward to Pozières, and on the other southward to Maltzhorn Farm. The 9th Division concerned had on the 14th taken the greater part of the village, and on the morning of the 15th its reserve brigade (the South African under Brigadier-General Lukin) was ordered to clear the wood. The struggle which began on that Saturday before dawn was to last for thirteen days, and to prove one of the costliest episodes of the whole battle. The situation was an ideal one for the defence. Longueval lay to the south-west of the wood, a straggling village with orchards at its northern end where the road climbed towards Flers. Delville itself was a mass of broken tree trunks, matted undergrowth, and shell holes. It had rides cut in it, running from north to south and from east to west, which were called by such names as " The Strand " and " Princes Street," and along these were the enemy trenches. The place was terribly at the mercy of the enemy guns, and on the north and south-east

sides the Germans had a strong trench line, some seventy yards from the trees, bristling with machine guns. The problem for the attack was far less to carry the wood than to hold it; for as soon as the perimeter was reached, our men came under machine-gun fire, while the whole interior was incessantly bombarded.

The South African Brigade carried the wood by noon on the 15th, but the other brigades did not obtain the whole of Longueval, and the enemy, from the northern end of the village, was able to counter-attack and force us back. The South Africans tried again on the 16th, but they had no chance under the hostile fire, and a counter-attack of the German 8th Division forced them in on the central alley. Again on the 17th they endeavoured to clear the place, and again with heavy losses they failed. But they clung desperately to the south-west corner, and it was not until the 20th that they were relieved. For four days the heroic remnant, under Lieutenant-Colonel Thackeray of the 3rd Battalion, along with the Scots of the other brigades, wrestled in hand-to-hand fighting such as the American armies knew in the last Wilderness Campaign. Their assault had been splendid, but their defence was a greater exploit. They hung on without food or water, while their ranks were terribly thinned, and at the end, when one battalion had lost all its officers, they repulsed an attack by the German 5th Division, the *corps d'élite* of Brandenburg. In this far-flung battle all parts of the empire won fame, and not least was the glory of the South African contingent.*

On Sunday, 16th July, Ovillers was at last completely taken after a stout defence, and the way was prepared for a general assault on Pozières. That day, too, on our right we widened the gap in the German front by the capture of Waterlot Farm, halfway between Longueval and Guillemont. The weather broke from the 16th to the 18th, and drenching rain and low mists made progress difficult. The enemy had got up many new batteries, whose positions could not be detected in such weather by our aircraft. He himself was better off, since we were fighting on ground he had once held, and he had the register of our trench lines and most of our possible gun positions. Our situation at Longueval was now an uncomfortable salient, and it was necessary to broaden it by pushing out towards High Wood. On the 20th, accordingly, the 7th Division attacked again at High Wood, and

* Delville Wood was not wholly in our hands till the attack of 25th August. The story of the South Africans' stand may be read in the present writer's *History of the South African Forces in France*, 1920.

carried all of it except the north part. A trench line ran across that north corner, where the prospect began to open towards Flers and Le Sars. This position was held with extraordinary resolution by the enemy, and it was two months from the first assault before the whole wood was in our possession.

The next step was to round off our capture of the enemy second position, and consolidate our ground, for it was very certain that the Germans would not be content to leave us in quiet possession. The second line being lost from east of Pozières to Delville Wood, the enemy was compelled to make a switch line to connect his third position with an uncaptured point in his second, such as Pozières. Fighting continued in the skirts of Delville, and among the orchards of Longueval, which had to be taken one by one. Apart from this general activity, our two main objectives were Pozières and Guillemont. The first, with the Windmill beyond it, was part of the crest of the Thiepval plateau. Our aim was the crown of the ridge, the watershed, which would give us direct observation over all the rolling country to the east. The vital points on this watershed were Mouquet Farm, between Thiepval and Pozières; the Windmill, now only a stone pedestal, on the highroad east of Pozières; High Wood; and the high ground directly east of Longueval. Guillemont was necessary to us before we could align our next advance with that of the French. Its special difficulties lay in the fact that the approach to it from Trônes Wood lay over a perfectly bare and open piece of country; that the enemy had excellent direct observation from Leuze Wood in its rear; that the quarry on its western edge had been made into a strong redoubt; and that the ground to the south of it between Maltzhorn and Falfemont Farms was broken by a three-pronged ravine, with Angle Wood in the centre, which the Germans held in strength, and which made it hard to form a defensive flank or link up with the French advance. Sir Douglas Haig has summarized the position: "The line of demarcation agreed upon between the French commander and myself ran from Maltzhorn Farm due eastward to the Combles valley, and then north-eastward up the valley to a point midway between Sailly-Saillisel and Morval. These two villages had been fixed upon as the objective respectively of the French left and of my right. In order to advance in co-operation with my right, and eventually to reach Sailly-Saillisel, our Allies had still to fight their way up that portion of the main ridge which lies between the Combles valley on the west and the

river Tortille on the east. To do so, they had to capture in the first place the strongly-fortified villages of Maurepas, Le Forest, Rancourt, and Frégicourt, besides many woods and strong systems of trenches. As the high ground on each side of the Combles valley commands the slopes of the ridge on the opposite side it was essential that the advance of the two armies should be simultaneous and made in the closest co-operation."

The weather did not favour us. The third week of July was rain and fog. The last week of that month and the first fortnight of August saw blazing summer weather, which in that arid and dusty land told severely on men wearing heavy steel helmets and carrying a load of equipment. There was little wind, and a heat-haze lay low on the uplands. This meant poor visibility at a time when air reconnaissance was most vital. Hence the task of counter-bombardment grew very difficult, and the steps in our progress became for the moment slow and irregular. A battle which advances without a hitch exists only in a staff college *kriegspiel*, and the wise general, in preparing his plans, makes ample allowance for delays.

On 19th July there came the first attempt on Guillemont from Trônes Wood, an attack by the 18th Division which failed to advance. On the 20th the French made good progress, pushing their front east of Hardecourt beyond the Combles–Cléry light railway, and south of the Somme widening the gap by carrying the German defence system from Barleux to Vermandovillers. For the two days following our guns bombarded the whole enemy front, and on the Sunday, 23rd July, came the next great infantry attack. That attack had a wide front, but its main fury was on the left, where Pozières and its Windmill crowned the slope up which ran the Albert–Bapaume road. The village had long ere this been pounded flat, the Windmill was a stump, and the trees in the gardens matchwood, but every yard of those devastated acres was fortified in the German fashion with covered trenches, deep dug-outs, and machine-gun emplacements.

The assault was delivered from two sides—the 48th Division (South Midland Territorials) moving from the south-west in the ground between Pozières and Ovillers, and the 1st Australian Division from the south-east, advancing from the direction of Contalmaison Villa. The movement began about midnight, and the Midlanders speedily cleared out the defences which the Germans had flung out south of the village to the left of the highroad, and held a line along the outskirts of the place in the direction of Thiepval. The Australians had a difficult task ; for they had first to take

a sunken road parallel with the highway, then a formidable line of trenches, and finally the high road itself which ran straight through the middle of the village. The Australian troops then and afterwards were second to none in the new British Army. In the famous landing at Gallipoli and in a dozen desperate fights in that peninsula, culminating in the great battle which began on August 6, 1915, they had shown themselves incomparable in the fury of assault and in reckless personal valour. In the grim struggle now beginning they had to face a far heavier fire and far more formidable defences than anything that Gallipoli could show. For their task not gallantry only but perfect battle discipline and perfect coolness were needed. The splendid troops were equal to the call. They won the highroad after desperate fighting in the ruined houses, and established a line where the breadth of the road alone separated them from the enemy. A famous division of British regulars on this flank sent them a message to say that they were proud to fight by their side.

On Monday and Tuesday the battle continued, and by the evening of the latter day most of Pozières was in our hands. By Wednesday morning, 26th July, the whole village was ours, and the Midlanders on the left were pushing northward and had taken two lines of trenches. The two divisions joined hands at the north corner, where they occupied the cemetery, and held a portion of the switch line. Here they lived under a perpetual enemy bombardment. The Germans still held the Windmill, which was the higher ground and gave them a good observation point. The sight of that ridge from the road east of Ovillers was one that no man who saw it was likely to forget. It seemed to be smothered monotonously in smoke and fire, while wafts of the thick heliotrope smell of the lachrymatory shells floated down from it. Out of the dust and glare would come Australian units which had been relieved, long, lean men with the shadows of a great fatigue around their deep-set, far-sighted eyes. They were perfectly cheerful and composed, and no Lowland Scot was ever less inclined to expansive speech. At the most they would admit in their slow, quiet voices that what they had been through had been "some battle."

Meantime there had been heavy fighting around Longueval and in Delville Wood.* On Thursday, the 27th, the wood was cleared all but its eastern side, and next day the last enemy out-

* The German troops employed in the defence of Longueval and Delville Wood since 14th July were successively the 6th Regiment of the 10th Bavarian Division, the 8th Division of the 4th Corps, and the 5th Division of the 3rd Corps.

post in Longueval village was captured by the 3rd Division. At the same time the 51st Division (Highland Territorials) was almost continuously engaged at High Wood, where in one week it made three fruitless attempts to drive the enemy out of the northern segment. On 23rd July we attacked Guillemont from the south and west, but failed, owing to the strength of the enemy's machine-gun fire. Early on the morning of Sunday, the 30th, the Australians attacked at Pozières towards the Windmill, and after a fierce hand-to-hand struggle in the darkness, advanced their front to the edge of the trench labyrinth which constituted that position. Next morning we attacked Guillemont from the north-west and west, while the French pushed almost to the edge of Maurepas. Troops of the 30th Division advanced right through Guillemont, till the failure of the attack on the left compelled them to retire, with heavy losses. Our farthest limit was the station on the light railway just outside Guillemont village.

Little happened for some days. The heat was now very great, so great that even men inured to an Australian summer found it hard to bear, and the maddening haze still muffled the landscape. We were aware that the enemy had strengthened his position, and brought up new troops and batteries. The French were meantime fighting their way through the remnants of the German second line north of the Somme between Hem Wood and Monacu Farm. There were strong counter-attacks against Delville Wood, which were beaten off by our guns before they got to close range. Daily we bombarded points in the enemy hinterland, and did much destruction among their depots and billets and heavy batteries. And then on the night of Friday, 4th August, came the final attack at Pozières.

We had already won the German second position up to the top of the village, where the new switch line joined on. The attack was in the nature of a surprise. It began at nine in the evening, when the light was still strong. The 2nd Australian Division advanced on the right at the Windmill, and the 12th Division on the left. The trenches, which had been almost obliterated by our guns, were carried at a rush, and before the darkness came we had taken the rest of the second position on a front of 2,000 yards. Counter-attacks followed all through the night, but they were badly co-ordinated, and achieved nothing. On Saturday we had pushed our line north and west of the village from 400 to 600 yards on a front of 3,000. Early on Sunday morning the Germans counter-attacked with liquid fire, and gained a small portion of

the trench line, which was speedily recovered. The position was now that we held the much-contested Windmill, and that we extended on the east of the village to the west end of the switch, while west of Pozières we had pushed so far north that the German line was drooping like the eaves of a steep roof. We had taken some 600 prisoners, and at last we were looking over the watershed.

The following week saw repeated attempts by the enemy to recover his losses. The German bombardment was incessant and intense, and on the high bare scarp around the Windmill our troops had to make heavy drafts on their fortitude. On Tuesday, 8th August, the British right, attacking at 4.20 a.m. in conjunction with the French, closed farther in on Guillemont. At Pozières, too, every day our lines advanced, especially in the angle toward Mouquet Farm, between the village and Thiepval. We were exposed to a flanking fire from Thiepval, and to the exactly ranged heavy batteries around Courcelette and Grandcourt. Our task was to break off and take heavy toll of the many German counter-attacks, and on the rebound to win, yard by yard, ground which made our position secure.

In the desperate strain of this fighting there was evidence that the superb German machine was beginning to creak and falter. Hitherto its strength had lain in the automatic precision of its ordering. Now, since reserves had to be hastily collected from all quarters, there was some fumbling in the command. Attacks made by half a dozen battalions collected from three divisions, battalions which had never before been brigaded together, were bound to lack the old vigour and cohesion. Units lost direction, staff work was imperfect, and what should have been a hammer-blow became a loose scrimmage. It was the fashion in Germany at this time to compare the Somme offensive of the Allies with the German attack on Verdun, very much to the advantage of the latter. The deduction was false. In every military aspect—in the extent of ground won, in the respective losses, in the accuracy and weight of artillery, in the quality of the infantry attacks, and in the precision of the generalship—the Verdun attack fell far short of the Picardy battle. The Verdun front, in its operative part, had been narrower than that of the Somme, but at least ten more enemy divisions had by the beginning of August been attracted to Picardy than had appeared between Avocourt and Vaux up to the end of April. The Crown Prince at Verdun speedily lost the initiative in any serious sense ; on the Somme, Below and Gallwitz never possessed it. There the enemy had to accept battle as the Allied will imposed

it, and no counter-attack could for a moment divert the Allied purpose.

The French, by the second week of August, had carried all the German third position south of the Somme. On Saturday, 12th August, after preparatory reconnaissances, they attacked the third line north of the river from the east of Hardecourt to opposite Buscourt. It was a well-organized assault, which on a front of over four miles swept away the enemy trenches and redoubts to an average depth of three-quarters of a mile. They took the cemetery of Maurepas and the southern slopes of Hill 109 on the Maurepas–Cléry road, and reached the saddle west of Cléry village. By the evening over 1,000 prisoners were in their hands. Four days later, on Wednesday, 16th August, they pushed their left flank—that adjoining the British—north of Maurepas, taking a mile of trenches, and south of that village captured all the enemy line on a front of a mile and a quarter. Except for a few inconsiderable sections the enemy third position opposite the French had gone.

The British to the north were not yet ready for their grand assault. They had the more difficult ground and the stronger enemy forces against them, and for six weeks had been steadily fighting uphill. At points they had reached the watershed, but they had not won enough of the high ground to give them positions against the German third line on the reverse slopes. The following week was therefore a tale of slow progress to the rim of the plateau, around Pozières, High Wood, and Guillemont. Each day saw something gained by hard fighting. On Sunday, the 13th, it was a section of trench north-west of Pozières, and another between Bazentin-le-Petit and Martinpuich. On Tuesday it was ground close to Mouquet Farm. On Wednesday it was the west and south-west environs of Guillemont and a 300-yards advance at High Wood. On Thursday there was progress north-west of Bazentin-le-Petit towards Martinpuich, and between Ginchy and Guillemont.

On Friday, 18th August, came the next combined attack. There was a steady pressure everywhere from Thiepval to the Somme. The main advance took place at 2.45 in the afternoon, in fantastic weather, with bursts of hot sunshine followed by thunderstorms and flights of rainbows. On the left of the front the attack was timed for 8 a.m. South of Thiepval, in the old German first line, was a strong work, the Leipzig Redoubt, into which we had already bitten. It was such a stronghold as we had

seen at Beaumont Hamel, a nest of deep dug-outs and subterranean galleries, well stocked with machine guns. As our front moved east to Pozières and Contalmaison we had neglected this corner, which had gradually become the apex of a sharp salient. It was garrisoned by Prussians of the 29th Regiment, who were confident in the impregnability of their refuge. They led an easy life, while their confederates on the crest were crowding in improvised trenches under our shelling. Those not on duty slept peacefully in their bunks at night, and played cards in the deep shelters. On Friday, after a sharp and sudden artillery preparation, two British battalions rushed the redoubt. We had learned by this time how to deal with the German machine guns. Many of the garrison fought stubbornly to the end; others we smoked out and rounded up like the occupants of a gambling-house surprised by the police. Six officers and 170 men surrendered in a body. In all, some 2,000 Germans were caught in this trap by numbers less than their own. There was no chance of a counter-stroke, for we got our machine guns in position at once, and our artillery caught every enemy attempt in the open.

Elsewhere on the front the fighting was harder and less successful. In the centre the 15th Division pushed closer to Martinpuich, and from High Wood southward we slightly advanced our lines. We also carried the last orchard at Longueval, and pressed towards the eastern rim of Delville Wood. Farther south we took the stone quarry on the edge of Guillemont after a hand-to-hand struggle of several hours, but failed to hold it. Meantime the French carried the greater part of Maurepas village, and the place called Calvary Hill to the south-east. This last was a great feat of arms, for they had against them a fresh division of the Prussian Guard (the 2nd), which had seen no serious action for many months.*

We were now fighting on the watershed. At Thiepval we held the ridge that overlooked the village from the south-east. We held all the high ground north of Pozières, which gave us a clear view of the country towards Bapaume, and our lines lay 300 yards beyond the Windmill. We had all the west side of High Wood and the ground between it and the Albert–Bapaume road. We were half-way between Longueval and Ginchy, and our pincers were encircling Guillemont. At last we were in position over against, and in direct view of, the German third line.

The next week was occupied in repelling German attempts to

* The whole of the 1st Guard Corps—the 1st and 2nd Divisions—was now facing the French north of the Somme.

recover lost ground, and in efforts to sharpen still further the Thiepval salient and to capture Guillemont. Thiepval, it should be remembered, was a point in the old German first line on the left flank of the great breach, and Guillemont was the one big position still untaken in the German second line. On Sunday, the 20th, the Germans shelled our front heavily, and at about noon attacked our new lines on the western side of High Wood. They reached a portion of our trenches, but were immediately driven out by our infantry. Next day, at High Wood and at Mouquet Farm, there were frequent bombing attacks which came to nothing. On Tuesday, 22nd August, we advanced steadily on our left, pushing our line to the very edge of what was once Mouquet Farm as well as to the north-east of it, and closing in to within 1,000 yards of Thiepval. On Wednesday night and Thursday morning a very severe counter-attack on our position at Guillemont, pressed with great determination, failed to win any ground. That afternoon, 24th August, we advanced nearer Thiepval, coming, at one point, within 500 yards of the place. In the evening, at five o'clock, the French carried Maurepas, and pushed their right on to the Combles railway, while the British 14th Division succeeded at last in clearing Delville Wood. Next day the French success enabled us to join up with our Allies south-east of Guillemont, where our pincers were now beginning to grip hard.

The following week was one of slow and steady progress, the most satisfactory feature of which was the frequency of the German counter-attacks and their failure. On 26th August, for example, troops of the 4th Division of the Prussian Guard, after a heavy bombardment, attacked south of Thiepval village, and were completely repulsed by the battalions holding that front. On Thursday evening, 31st August, five violent and futile assaults were made on our front between High Wood and Ginchy. It looked as if the enemy was trying in vain to anticipate the next great stage of our offensive which was now imminent.

On Sunday, 3rd September, at twelve noon, the whole Allied front pressed forward. The 4th Australian and the 25th and 49th British divisions attacked on the extreme left—near Mouquet Farm and towards Thiepval, and against the enemy position just north of the Ancre. In their task they encountered the 1st Guard Reserve Division, and took several hundred prisoners. They carried various strong positions, won ground east of Mouquet Farm, and still further narrowed the Thiepval salient. Our centre took High Wood in the afternoon, but pressed on too far, and had to

give ground before a German counter-attack. On their right the 7th Division took and lost Ginchy, while the 20th Division swept through Guillemont to the sunken road, 500 yards to the east. The fall of Guillemont meant that we now held the last point in the old German second position between Mouquet Farm and the junction with the French. It had been most gallantly defended by the enemy for twenty-five days without relief.* Farther south we attacked but failed to capture Falfemont Farm. Meantime the French—the 1st Corps—had marched steadily from victory to victory. Shortly after noon, on a 3¾ miles front between Maurepas and the Somme, they had attacked after an intense artillery preparation. They carried the villages of Le Forest and Cléry, and north of the former place won the German lines to the outskirts of Combles.

The advance was only beginning. On Monday, 4th September, all enemy counter-attacks were beaten off, and further ground won by the British near Falfemont Farm. That night, in a torrent of rain, our men pressed on, and before midday on Tuesday, 5th September, they were nearly a mile east of Guillemont, and well into Leuze Wood. That evening the whole of the wood was taken, as well as the hotly disputed Falfemont Farm, and the British were less than 1,000 yards from the town of Combles, on which the French were pressing in on the south.

Meantime, about two in the afternoon, a new French army came into action south of the Somme on a front of a dozen miles from Barleux to south of Chaulnes. This was General Micheler's Tenth Army, with nine divisions in line, which had been waiting for two months on the order to advance. At a bound it carried the whole of the German first position from Vermandovillers to Chilly, a front of nearly three miles, and took some 3,000 unwounded prisoners. Next day the French pressed on both north and south of the river, and in the former area reached the west end of the Anderlu Wood, carried the Hôpital Farm, the Rainette Wood, part of the ridge on which ran the road from Bouchavesnes to Cléry, and the village of Omiécourt.

From Wednesday, 6th September, to the night of Friday, the 8th, the Germans strove in vain to win back what they had lost. On the whole thirty miles from Thiepval to Chilly there were violent counter-attacks which had no success, though four divisions of the Prussian Guard shared in them. The Allied artillery

* By the German 27th Division. Its commander, Otto von Moser, received the Order of Merit.

broke up the massed infantry in most cases long before they reached our trenches. On Saturday, 9th September, the 16th (Irish) Division carried Ginchy. The attack was delivered at 4.45 in the afternoon, on a broad front, but, though highly successful in this one area, it failed elsewhere. We made no progress in High Wood, we were checked east of Delville, and, most important of all, we did not succeed in carrying the work east of Ginchy called the Quadrilateral, which at a later day was to prove a thorn in our side.

Nevertheless the main objects had been attained. The Allied front was now in a symmetrical line, and everywhere on the highest ground. Combles was held in a tight clutch, and the French Tenth Army was within 800 yards of Chaulnes Station, and was holding 2½ miles of the Chaulnes–Roye railway, thereby cutting the chief German line of lateral communication. The first objective which the Allies had set before themselves on 1st July had been won. By the 10th of September the British had made good the old German second position, and had won the crest of the uplands, while the French in their section had advanced almost to the gates of Péronne, and their new army on the right had begun to widen the breach. That moment was in a very real sense the end of a phase, the first and perhaps the most critical phase of the Somme battle. The immense fortifications of her main position represented for Germany the accumulated capital of two years. She had raised these defences when she was stronger than her adversaries in guns and in men. Now she was weaker, and her capital was gone. Thenceforth the campaign entered upon a new stage, new alike in strategical and tactical problems. From Thiepval to Chaulnes the enemy was in improvised positions. The day of manœuvre battles had not come, but in that section the rigidity of the old trench warfare had vanished. Haig's aim was to push eastward till he secured a good defensive position, and then turn north against the flank and rear of the German positions beyond the Ancre. It looked as if he were soon to attain the first half of his purpose.

CHAPTER LXIII.

THE BATTLE OF THE SOMME (*continued*).

September 9–*November* 18, 1916.

The Attack of 15th September—Raymond Asquith—The Attack of 25th September—The Weather breaks—The October Fighting—The French reach Sailly-Saillisel—The Battle of the Ancre—Summary of whole Action—Ludendorff's Admissions.

(*Map*, p. 214.)

THE capture of Guillemont on 3rd September meant the end of the German second position on the whole front between Thiepval and Estrées. The Allies were faced with a new problem, to understand which it is necessary to consider the nature of the defences still before them and the peculiar configuration of the country.

The advance of 1st July had carried the first enemy lines on a broad front, but the failure of the attack between Gommecourt and Thiepval had made the breach eight miles less than the original plan. The advance of 14th July gave us the second line on a still narrower front—from Bazentin-le-Petit to Longueval. The danger now was that the Allied thrust, if continued, might show a rapidly narrowing wedge which would result in the formation of a sharp and precarious salient. Accordingly, Sir Douglas Haig broadened the breach by striking out to left and right, capturing first Pozières and the high ground at Mouquet Farm, and then—on his other flank—Guillemont and Ginchy. These successes made the gap in the second position some seven miles wide, and brought the British front in most places to the highest ground, from which direct observation was obtainable over the lower slopes and valley pockets to the east. We did not yet hold the complete crown of the ridge, though at Mouquet Farm and at High Wood we had positions which no superior height commanded.

The German third position had at the beginning of the battle been only in embryo. Before the attack of 14th July it had been more or less completed, and by the beginning of September it had

been greatly elaborated and a fourth position prepared behind it. It was based on a string of fortified villages which lay on the reverse slopes of the main ridge—Courcelette, Martinpuich, Flers, Les-bœufs, and Morval. Behind it was an intermediate line, with Le Sars, Eaucourt l'Abbaye, and Gueudecourt as strong positions in it; and farther back a fourth position, which lay just west of the Bapaume-Péronne road, covering the villages of Sailly-Saillisel and Le Transloy. This was the line protecting Bapaume; the next position, at this moment only roughly sketched out, lay well to the east of that town.

Since the battle began the Germans had, up to the second week in September, brought sixty-one divisions into action in the Somme area; seven had been refitted and sent in again; on 14th September they were holding the line with fifteen divisions—which gives fifty-three as the number which had been used up. The German losses throughout had been high. The French casualties had been comparatively light—for they had fought economically under close cover of their guns, and had had, on the whole, the easier tactical problem to face. The British losses had been, beyond doubt, lower than those of the enemy, and our most conspicuous successes, such as the advance of 1st July south of Thiepval and the action of 14th July, had been achieved at a comparatively small cost. Our main casualties arose from the failure north of Thiepval on the first day, and the taking of desperately defended and almost impregnable positions like Delville Wood and Guillemont.

In the ten weeks' battle the enemy had shown many ups and downs of strength. At one moment his whole front would appear to be crumbling; at another the arrival of fresh batteries from Verdun and new troops would solidify his line. The effort had strained his capacity to its full. On 5th September Hindenburg and Ludendorff paid their first visit to the West, and the narrative of the latter witnesses to their grave view of the case.* They found that the German infantry, relying too much upon fortifications and artillery, were losing their power of taking the offensive. They resolutely faced the crisis, drastically revised the tactical methods, and reorganized the whole Western front. Early in the battle the old I. Army—which had been in abeyance since the preceding spring—was revived north of the Somme and placed under Fritz von Below, while the II. Army, now under Gallwitz, held the line south of the river. An army group was created, under Prince

* See Ludendorff's *My War Memories*, I., p. 265, etc.

Rupprecht of Bavaria, comprising his own VI. Army, the I. and II. Armies, and the hitherto ungrouped VII. Army of Schubert. Strenuous efforts were made to create a reserve, for Germany in her defence had already used the best fighting material she possessed. During those ten weeks almost all her most famous units had appeared on the Somme—the cream of the Bavarian troops, the 5th Brandenburgers, and every single division of the Guard and Guard Reserve Corps.

In the early days of September the Allied Command had evidence that the enemy was in no very happy condition. The loss of Ginchy and Guillemont had enabled the British to come into line with the left wing of Fayolle's great advance, while the fall of certain vital positions on the Thiepval Ridge gave us observation over a great space of country and threatened Thiepval, which was the pivot of all the German defence in the northern section of the battle-ground. The Allied front north of the Somme had the river as a defensive flank on its right, and might presently have the Ancre to fill the same part on its left. Hence the situation was ripe for a further thrust which, if successful, might give our advance a new orientation. If the German third line could be carried, it might be possible to strike out on the flanks, repeating on a far greater scale the practice already followed. Bapaume itself was not the objective, but a thrust north-eastward across the upper Ancre, to get behind the great slab of unbroken enemy positions from Thiepval northwards. That would be the ultimate reward of a complete success; in the meantime our task was to break through the enemy's third line and test his powers of resistance.

It seemed a propitious moment for a concerted blow. The situation on the whole front was good. Fayolle's left wing had won conspicuous successes and had its spirits high, while Micheler was moving his pincers towards Chaulnes and playing havoc with the main German lateral communications. Elsewhere in Europe things went well for the Allies. On 28th August Rumania had entered the war, and her troops were pouring into Transylvania. As it turned out, it was a premature and fruitless movement, but it compelled Germany to take instant steps to meet the menace. There had been important changes in the German High Command, and it might reasonably be assumed that Hindenburg and Ludendorff were not yet quite at ease in the saddle. Brussilov was still pinning down the Austro-German forces on the Russian front, and Sarrail had just begun his offensive in the Balkans. In the event

of a real *débâcle* in the West the enemy might be hard pressed to find the men to fill the breach. Every action, it should be remembered, is a packet of surprises. There is an immediate local objective, but on success any one of twenty consequences may follow. The wise commander cannot count on any of these consequences, but he must not neglect them in his calculations. If the gods send him good fortune he must be ready to take it, and he naturally chooses a season when the gods seem propitious.

I.

On Tuesday, 12th September, a comprehensive bombardment began all along the British front from Thiepval to Ginchy. The whole of Rawlinson's Fourth Army was destined for the action, as well as the right corps—the 1st Canadian—of the Fifth Army, while on the left of the battle to the 11th Division was allotted a preliminary attack, which was partly in the nature of a feint and partly a necessary preparatory step. The immediate objective of the different units must be clearly noted. On the left of the main front the 2nd Canadian Division was directed against Courcelette. On their right the 15th (Scottish) Division had for its task to clear the remains of the old Switch line and encircle Martinpuich, but not—on the first day at any rate—to attempt the capture of what was believed to be a most formidable stronghold. Going south, the 50th and 47th Divisions had to clear High Wood. On their right the New Zealanders had Flers as their objective, while the 41st and 14th Divisions had to make good the ground east and north of Delville Wood. Next to them the Guards and the 6th Division were to move north-east from Ginchy against Lesbœufs and Morval, while on the extreme right of the British front the 56th Division was to carry Bouleaux Wood and form a defensive flank. It had been agreed between Haig and Foch that Combles should not be directly attacked, but pinched by an advance on both sides of it. This movement was no easy task, for, in Haig's words, "the line of the French advance was narrowed almost to a defile by the extensive and strongly fortified wood of St. Pierre Vaast on the one side, and on the other by the Combles valley." The closest co-operation was necessary to enable the two commands to solve a highly intricate tactical problem.

The British force to be employed in the new advance was for the most part fresh. The Guards had not been in action since Loos the previous September, the Canadians were new to the Somme

area, while it was the first experience of the New Zealanders on the Western front. In this stage, too, a new weapon was to be used. The "tanks," officially known as "Machine Gun Corps, Heavy Section," had come out from home some time before, and had been parked in secluded spots at the back of the front. The world is now familiar with those strange machines, which, shaped like monstrous toads, crawled imperturbably over wire and parapets, butted down houses, shouldered trees aside, and humped themselves over the stoutest walls. They were an experiment which could only be proved in practice, and the design in using them at this stage was principally to find out their weak points, so as to perfect their mechanism for the future. Their main tactical purpose was to clear out redoubts and nests of machine guns which, as we had found to our sorrow at Loos, might hang up the most resolute troops. For this object they must precede the infantry attack, and the task of assembling them before the parapets were crossed was fraught with difficulty, for they were neither silent nor inconspicuous. The things had been kept a profound secret, and until the very eve of the advance few in the British army had even heard of them. On 14th September, the day before our attack, some of them were seen by German airplanes, and the German troops were warned that the British had some strange new engine. Rumours also seem to have reached Germany five or six weeks earlier, for orders had been issued to supply the soldiers with a special kind of armour-piercing bullet. But of the real nature of the device the enemy had no inkling.

On the night of Thursday, the 14th, the Fifth Army carried out its preliminary task. On a front of a thousand yards south-east of Thiepval the 11th Division stormed the Hohenzollern trench and the strong redoubt which the Germans called the "Wunderwerk," taking many prisoners and themselves losing little. The fame of this enterprise has been somewhat obscured by the great advance which followed, but it was a most workmanlike and skilful performance, and it had a real effect on the subsequent battle. It deceived the enemy as to the exact terrain of the main assault, and it caused him to launch a counter-attack in an area which was part of the principal battle-ground, with the result that our left wing, after checking his attack, was able to catch him on the rebound.

The morning of Friday, 15th September, was perfect autumn weather, with a light mist filling the hollows and shrouding the slopes. At 6 a.m. the British bombardment, which had now lasted

for three days, rose to the fury of hurricane fire. The enemy had a thousand guns of all calibres massed against us, and his defences consisted of a triple line of entrenchments and a series of advanced posts manned by machine guns. Our earlier bombardment had cut his wire and destroyed many of his trenches, besides hampering greatly his bringing up of men, rations, and shells. The final twenty minutes of intense fire, slowly creeping forward with our infantry close under its shadow, pinned him to his positions and interfered with his counter-barrage. At twenty minutes past six our men crossed the parapets and moved forward methodically towards the enemy. The Germans, manning their trenches as our guns lengthened, saw through the thin mist inhuman shapes crawling towards them, things like gigantic slugs, spitting fire from their mottled sides. They had been warned of a new weapon, but what mortal weapon was this terror that walked by day? And ere they could collect their dazed wits the British bayonets were upon them.

On the left and centre the attack was instantly successful. The Canadians, after beating off the German counter-attack, carried Courcelette in the afternoon. In this advance French-Canadian troops played a distinguished part in winning back some miles of French soil for their ancient motherland. On their right the 15th Division, which had already been six weeks in line, performed something more than the task allotted it. The capture of Martinpuich was not part of the programme of the day's operations, but the Scots pushed east and west of the village, and at a quarter-past five in the evening had the place in their hands. Farther south there was fierce fighting in the old cockpit of High Wood. It was two months since we had first effected an entrance into its ill-omened shades, but we had been forced back, and for long had to be content with its southern corner. The strong German third line—which ran across its northern half on the very crest of the ridge—and the endless craters and machine-gun redoubts made it a desperate nut to crack. We had pushed out horns to east and west of it, but the northern stronghold in the wood itself had defied all our efforts. It was held on that day by troops of the 2nd Bavarian Corps, and the German ranks have shown no better fighting stuff. Our first attack failed, but on a second attempt the 47th Division, a little after noon, swept the place clear, though not without heavy losses. Beyond them the New Zealanders, with the 41st Division on their right, carried the switch line and took Flers with little trouble. They were preceded by a tank, which

waddled complacently up the main street of the village, with the enemy's bullets rattling harmlessly off its sides, followed by cheering and laughing British troops. Farther south we advanced our front for nearly a mile and a half. The 14th Division, debouching from Delville Wood, cleared Mystery Corner on its eastern side before the general attack began, and then pushed forward north of Ginchy in the direction of Lesbœufs.

Only on the right wing was the tale of success incomplete. Ginchy, it will be remembered, had been carried on 9th September, but its environs were not yet fully cleared, and the enemy held the formidable point known as the Quadrilateral. This was situated about 700 yards east of Ginchy, at a bend of the Morval road, where it passed through a deep wooded ravine. The 6th Division was directed against it, with the Guards on its left and the 56th Division on its right. The business of the last-named was to carry Bouleaux Wood and form a defensive flank north of Combles, while the Guards were to advance from Ginchy on Lesbœufs. But the strength of the Quadrilateral foiled the plan. The Londoners did indeed enter Bouleaux Wood, but the 6th Division on their left was fatally hung up in front of the Quadrilateral, and this in turn exposed the right flank of the Guards. The brigades of the latter advanced, as they have always advanced, with perfect discipline and courage. But both their flanks were enfiladed; the front of attack was too narrow; the sunken road before them was strongly held by machine guns; they somewhat lost direction; and, in consequence, no part of our right attack gained its full objective. There, and in High Wood, we incurred most of the casualties of the day. The check was the more regrettable since complete success in this area was tactically more important than elsewhere.

But after all deductions were made the day's results were in a high degree satisfactory. We had broken in one day through three of the enemy's main defensive systems, and on a front of over six miles had advanced to an average depth of a mile. It was the most effective blow yet dealt at the enemy by British troops. It gave us not only the high ground between Thiepval and the Combles valley, but placed us well down the forward slopes. "The damage to the enemy's *moral*," said the official summary, "is probably of greater consequence than the seizure of dominating positions and the capture of between four and five thousand prisoners." Three famous Bavarian divisions had been engaged and completely shattered, and the whole enemy front thrown into disorder.

The tanks had, for a new experiment, done wonders. Some of them broke down on the way up, and, of the thirty-two which reached their starting-points, fourteen came to grief early in the day. The remainder did brilliant service, some squatting on enemy trenches and clearing them by machine-gun fire, some flattening out uncut wire, others destroying machine-gun nests and redoubts or strong points like the sugar factory at Courcelette. But their moral effect was greater than the material damage they wrought. The sight of those deliberate impersonal engines ruthlessly grinding down the most cherished defences put something like panic into troops who had always prided themselves upon the superior merit of their own fighting "machine." Beyond doubt, too, the presence of the tanks added greatly to the zeal and confidence of our assaulting infantry. An element of sheer comedy was introduced into the grim business of war, and comedy is dear to the heart of the British soldier. The crews of the tanks seemed to have acquired some of the light-heartedness of the British sailor. Penned up in a narrow stuffy space, condemned to a form of motion compared with which that of the queasiest vessel was steady, and at the mercy of unknown perils, these adventurers faced their task with the zest of a boy on holiday.

In the achievements of the day our aircraft nobly co-operated. They destroyed thirteen hostile machines and drove nine more in a broken condition to ground. They bombarded enemy headquarters and vital points on all his railway lines. They destroyed German kite balloons, and so put out the eyes of the defence. They guided our artillery fire, and they brought back frequent and accurate reports of every stage in the infantry advance. Moreover, they attacked both enemy artillery and infantry with their machine-gun fire from a low elevation. In the week of the action on the whole Somme battle-ground only fourteen enemy machines managed to cross our lines, while our airplanes made between two thousand and three thousand flights far behind the German front.

In the Guards' advance, among other gallant and distinguished officers, there fell one whose death was, in a peculiar sense, a loss to his country and the future. Lieutenant Raymond Asquith, of the Grenadier Guards, the eldest son of the British Prime Minister, died while leading his men through the fatal enfilading fire from the corner of Ginchy village. In this war the gods took toll of every rank and class. Few generals and statesmen in the Allied nations but had to mourn intimate bereavements, and Castelnau

had given three sons for his country. But the death of Raymond Asquith had a poignancy apart from his birth and position, and it may be permitted to an old friend to pay his tribute to a heroic memory.

A scholar of the ripe Elizabethan type, a brilliant wit, an accomplished poet, a sound lawyer—these things were borne lightly, for his greatness was not in his attainments but in himself. He had always borne a curious aloofness towards mere worldly success. He loved the things of the mind for their own sake—good books, good talk, the company of friends—and the rewards of common ambition seemed to him too trivial for a man's care. He was of the spending type in life, giving freely of the riches of his nature, but asking nothing in return. His carelessness of personal gain, his inability to trim or truckle, and his aloofness from the facile acquaintanceships of the modern world made him incomprehensible to many, and his high fastidiousness gave him a certain air of coldness. Most noble in presence, and with every grace of voice and manner, he moved among men like a being of another race, scornfully detached from the common struggle; and only his friends knew the warmth and loyalty of his soul. At the outbreak of war he joined a Territorial battalion, from which he was later transferred to the Grenadiers. More than most men he hated the loud bellicosities of politics, and he had never done homage to the deities of the crowd. His critical sense made him chary of enthusiasm, and it was no sudden sentimental fervour that swept him into the army. He saw his duty, and though it meant the shattering of every taste and interest, he did it joyfully, and did it to the full. For a little he had a post on the Staff, but applied to be sent back to his battalion, since he wished no privileges. In our long roll of honour no nobler figure will find a place. He was a type of his country at its best—shy of rhetorical professions, austerely self-respecting, one who hid his devotion under a mask of indifference, and, when the hour came, revealed it only in deeds. Many gave their all for the cause, but few had so much to give. He loved his youth, and his youth has become eternal. Debonair and brilliant and brave, he is now part of that immortal England which knows not age or weariness or defeat.

Meanwhile the French had not been idle. On Wednesday, 13th September, two days before the British advance, Fayolle carried Bouchavesnes, east of the Bapaume–Péronne road, taking over two thousand prisoners. He was now not three miles from

the vital position of Mont St. Quentin—the key of Péronne—facing it across the little valley of the Tortille. Next day the French had the farm of Le Priez, south-east of Combles, and on the afternoon of Sunday, the 17th, south of the Somme their right wing carried the remainder of Vermandovillers and Berny, and the intervening ground around Deniécourt. The following day Deniécourt, with its strongly fortified park, was captured. This gave them the whole of the Berny–Deniécourt plateau, commanding the lower plateau where stood the villages of Ablaincourt and Pressoire, and menaced Barleux, the pivot of enemy resistance south of the river.

For the next week there was a lull in the main operations while the hammer was swung back for another blow. On the 16th the Canadians were counter-attacked at Courcelette, and the 6th Bavarian Division, newly arrived, struck at the New Zealanders at Flers. Both efforts failed, and south of Combles the fresh troops of the German 18th Corps succeeded no better against the French. The most vigorous counter-strokes were those which the Canadians received, and which were repeated daily for nearly a week. Meantime, on Monday, the 18th, the Quadrilateral was carried—carried by the division which had been blocked by it three days before. It was not won without a heavy fight at close quarters, for the garrison resisted stoutly; but we closed in on it from all sides, and by the evening had pushed our front five hundred yards beyond it to the hollow before Morval.

The week was dull and cloudy, and from the Monday to the Wednesday it rained without ceasing. But by the Friday it had cleared, though the mornings were now thick with autumn haze, and we were able once more to get that direct observation and aerial reconnaissance which is an indispensable preliminary to a great attack. On Sunday, the 24th, our batteries opened again, this time against the uncaptured points in the German third line like Morval and Lesbœufs, against intermediate positions like Gueudecourt, and especially against Thiepval, which we now commanded from the east. The plan was for an attack by the Fourth Army on Monday the 25th, with—on its left wing—small local objectives; but, on the right and centre, aiming at completing the captures which had been the ultimate objectives of the advance of the 15th. The following day the right wing of the Fifth Army would come into action, and it was hoped that from Thiepval to Combles the enemy would be driven back to his fourth line of defence and our own front pushed up well within assaulting distance.

The hour of attack on the 25th was fixed at thirty-five minutes after noon. It was bright, cloudless weather, but the heat of the sun had lost its summer strength. That day saw an advance the most perfect yet made in any stage of the battle, for in almost every part of the field we won what we sought. The extreme left of the 3rd Corps was held up north of Courcelette, but the remaining two divisions carried out the tasks assigned to them. So did the centre and left divisions of the 15th Corps, while part of the 21st Division, assisted by a tank and an airplane, took Gueudecourt. The 14th Corps succeeded everywhere. The Guards, eager to avenge their sufferings of the week before, despite the heavy losses on their left, swept irresistibly upon Lesbœufs. South of them the 5th Division took Morval, the village on the height north of Combles which, with its subterranean quarries and elaborate trench system, was a most formidable stronghold. Combles was now fairly between the pincers. It might have fallen that day, but the French attack on Frégicourt failed, though they carried the village of Rancourt on the Bapaume–Péronne road.

By the evening of the 25th the British had stormed an enemy front of six miles between Combles and Martinpuich to a depth of more than a mile. The fall of Morval gave them the last piece of uncaptured high ground on that backbone of ridge which runs from Thiepval through High Wood and Ginchy. The next day the French took Frégicourt, and Combles fell. The enemy had evacuated it, and though great stores of material were taken in its catacombs, the number of prisoners was small.

Meantime, on the British left, on the 26th, the success was not less conspicuous. The 11th and 18th Divisions of the Fifth Army, advancing at twenty-five minutes after noon under the cover of our artillery barrage, had carried Thiepval, the north-west corner of Mouquet Farm, and the Zollern Redoubt on the eastern crest. The German pivot had gone, the pivot which they had believed impregnable. So skilful was our barrage that our men were over the German parapets and into the dug-outs before machine guns could be got up to repel them. Here the prisoners were numerous, for the attack was in the nature of a surprise.

On the evening of 26th September the Allied fortunes in the West had never looked brighter. The enemy was now in his fourth line, without the benefit of the high ground, and there was no chance of retrieving his disadvantages by observation from the air. Since 1st July the British alone had taken over twenty-six thousand prisoners, and had engaged thirty-eight German divi-

sions, the flower of the army, of which twenty-nine had been withdrawn exhausted and broken. The enemy had been compelled to use up his reserves in repeated costly and futile counter-attacks without compelling the Allies to relax for one moment their methodical pressure. A hundred captured documents showed that the German *moral* had been shaken, and that the German machine was falling badly out of gear. In normal seasons at least another month of fine weather might be reasonably counted on, and in that month further blows might be struck with cumulative force. In France they spoke of a "Picardy summer"—of fair bright days at the end of autumn when the ground was dry and the air of a crystal clearness. A fortnight of such days would suffice for a crowning achievement.

The hope was destined to fail. The guns were scarcely silent after the great attack of the 26th, when the weather broke, and October was one long succession of tempestuous gales and drenching rains.

II.

To understand the difficulties which untoward weather imposed on the Allied advance, it is necessary to grasp the nature of the fifty square miles of ground which three months' fighting had given them, and over which lay the communications between their firing line and the rear. From a position like the north end of High Wood almost the whole British battle-ground on a clear day was visible to the eye. To reach the place from the old Allied front line some four miles of bad roads had to be traversed. They would have been bad roads in a moorland parish, where they suffered only the transit of the infrequent carrier's cart; for at the best they were mere country tracks, casually engineered, and with no solid foundation. But here they had to support such a traffic as the world had scarcely seen before. Not the biggest mining camp or the vastest engineering undertaking had ever produced one tithe of the activity which existed behind each section of the battle line. There were places like Crewe, places like the skirts of Birmingham, places like Aldershot or Salisbury Plain. It has already been pointed out that the immense and complex mechanism of modern armies resembles a series of pyramids which taper to a point as they near the front. Though all modern science had gone to the making of this war, at the end, in spite of every artificial aid, it became elementary, akin in many respects to the days of bows and arrows. It was true of the whole front, but the Somme

battle-ground was peculiar in this, that the area of land where the devices of civilization broke down was far larger than elsewhere. Elsewhere it was defined more or less by the limits of the enemy's observation and fire. On the Somme it was defined by the previous three months' battle. It was not the German guns which made the trouble on the ground between the Albert–Péronne road and the British firing line. Casual bombardments vexed us little. It was the hostile elements and the unkindly nature of Mother Earth.

The country roads had been rutted out of recognition by endless transport, and, since they never had much of a bottom, the toil of the road-menders had nothing to build upon. New roads were hard to make, for the chalky soil was poor, and had been so churned up by shelling and the movement of guns and troops that it had lost all cohesion. Countless shells had burst below the ground, causing everywhere subsidences and cavities. There was no stone in the countryside and little wood, so repairing materials had to be brought from a distance, which still further complicated the problem. To mend a road you must give it a rest, but there was little chance of a rest for any of those poor tortured passages. In all the district there were but two good highways—one running at right angles to our front from Albert to Bapaume, the other parallel to our old front line from Albert to Péronne. These, to begin with, were the best type of *routes nationales*—broad, well-engineered, lined with orderly poplars. By the third month of the battle even these were showing signs of wear, and to travel on either in a motor car was a switchback journey. If the famous highroads declined, what was likely to be the condition of the country lanes which rayed around Contalmaison, Longueval, and Guillemont ?

Let us assume that early in October we have taken our stand at the northern angle of High Wood. It is only a spectre of a wood, a horrible place of matted tree trunks and crumbling trench lines, full of mementoes of the dead and all the dreadful debris of battle. To reach it we have walked across two miles of what once must have been breezy downland, patched with little fields of roots and grain. It is now like a waste brickfield in a decaying suburb, pock-marked with shell-holes, littered with cartridge clips, equipment, fragments of wire, and every kind of tin can. Over all the area hangs the curious, bitter, unwholesome smell of burning—an odour which will always recall to every soldier the immediate front of battle. The air is clear, and we look from the height over a shallow trough towards the low slopes in front of the Transloy road, behind which lies the German fourth line. Our own front

is some thousands of yards off, close under that hillock which is the famous Butte de Warlencourt. Far on our left is the lift of the Thiepval ridge, and nearer us, hidden by the slope, are the ruins of Martinpuich. Le Sars and Eaucourt l'Abbaye are before us, Flers a little to the right, and beyond it Gueudecourt. On our extreme right rise the slopes of Sailly-Saillisel—one can see the shattered trees lining the Bapaume–Péronne road—and, hidden by the fall of the ground, are Lesbœufs and Morval. Behind us are things like scarred patches on the hillsides. They are the remains of the Bazentin woods and the ominous wood of Delville. The whole confines of the British battle-ground lie open to the eye, from the Thiepval ridge in the north to the downs which ring the site of Combles. Look west, and beyond the dreary country we have crossed rise green downs set with woods untouched by shell—the normal, pleasant land of Picardy. Look east, beyond our front line and the smoke puffs, across the Warlencourt and Gueudecourt ridges, and on the sky-line there also appear unbroken woods, and here and there a church spire and the smoke of villages. The German retirement in September had been rapid, and we have reached the fringes of a land as yet little scarred by combat. We are looking at the boundaries of the battlefield. We have pushed the enemy right up to the edge of habitable and undevastated country, but we pay for our success in having behind us a strip of sheer desolation.

There were thus two no-man's-lands. One was between the front lines; the other lay between the old enemy front and the front we had won. The second was the bigger problem, for across it must be brought the supplies of a great army. This was a war of motor transport, and we were doing what the early Victorians pronounced impossible—running the equivalent of steam engines not on prepared tracks, but on highroads, running them day and night in endless relays. And these highroads were not the decent macadamized ways of England, but roads which would be despised in Sutherland or Connaught.

The problem was hard enough in fine weather; but let the rain come and soak the churned-up soil, and the whole land became a morass. There was no *pavé*, as in Flanders, to make a firm causeway. Every road became a watercourse, and in the hollows the mud was as deep as a man's thighs. An army must be fed, troops must be relieved, guns must be supplied, and so there could be no slackening of the traffic. Off the roads the ground was a squelching bog, dug-outs crumbled in, and communication trenches ceased

to be. In areas such as Ypres and Festubert, where the soil was naturally water-logged, the conditions were worse; but at Ypres and Festubert we had not six miles of sponge, varied by mud torrents, across which all transport must pass.

Weather is a vital condition of success in operations where great armies are concerned, for men and guns cannot fight on air. In modern war it is more urgent than ever, since aerial reconnaissance plays so great a part, and Napoleon's "fifth element," mud, grows in importance with the complexity of the fighting machine. Again, in semi-static trench warfare, where the same area remains for long the battlefield, the condition of the ground is the first fact to be reckoned with. Once we grasp this, the difficulty of the October campaign, waged in almost continuous rain, will be apparent. But no words can convey an adequate impression of the Somme area after a week's downpour. Its discomforts had to be endured to be understood.

The topography of the immediate battle-ground demands a note from the point of view of its tactical peculiarities. The British line at the end of September ran from the Schwaben Redoubt, 1,000 yards north of Thiepval, along the ridge to a point north-east of Courcelette; then just in front of Martinpuich, Flers, Gueudecourt, and Lesbœufs to the junction with the French. Morval was now part of the French area. From Thiepval to the north-east of Courcelette the line was for the most part on the crest of the ridge; it then bent southward and followed generally the foot of the eastern slopes. But a special topographical feature complicated the position. Before our front a shallow depression ran north-west from north of Sailly-Saillisel to about two thousand yards south of Bapaume, where it turned westward and joined the glen of the Ancre at Miraumont. From the main Thiepval–Morval ridge a series of long spurs descended into this valley, of which two were of special importance. One was the hammer-headed spur immediately west of Flers, at the western end of which stood the tumulus called the Butte de Warlencourt. The other was a spur which, lying across the main trend of the ground, ran north from Morval to Thilloy, passing 1,000 yards to the east of Gueudecourt. Behind these spurs lay the German fourth position. It was in the main a position on reverse slopes, and so screened from immediate observation, though our command of the higher ground gave us a view of its hinterland. Our own possession of the heights, great though its advantages were, had certain drawbacks, for it meant that our communications had to make the descent

of the reverse slopes, and were thus exposed to some extent to the enemy's observation and long-range fire.

The next advance of the British army had therefore two distinct objectives. The first—the task of the Fourth Army—was to carry the two spurs, and so get within assaulting distance of the German fourth line. Even if the grand assault should be postponed, the possession of the spurs would greatly relieve our situation, by giving us cover for our advanced gun positions and a certain shelter for the bringing up of supplies. It should be remembered that the spurs were not part of the German main front. They were held by the enemy as intermediate positions, and very strongly held—every advantage being taken of sunken roads, buildings, and the undulating nature of the country. They represented for the fourth German line what Contalmaison had represented for the second; till they were carried no general assault on the main front could be undertaken. The second task—that of the Fifth Army—was to master the whole of the high ground on the Thiepval ridge, so as to get direct observation into the Ancre glen and over the uplands north and north-east of it.

The month of October provided a record in wetness, spells of drenching rain being varied by dull, misty days, so that the sodden land had no chance of drying. The carrying of the spurs—meant as a preliminary step to a general attack—proved an operation so full of difficulties that it occupied all our efforts during the month, and with it all was not completed. The story of these weeks is one of minor operations, local actions with strictly limited objectives undertaken by only a few battalions. In the face of every conceivable difficulty we moved slowly up the intervening slopes.

At first there was a certain briskness in our movement. From Flers north-westward, in front of Eaucourt l'Abbaye and Le Sars, ran a very strong trench system, which we called the Flers line, and which was virtually a switch connecting the old German third line with the intermediate positions in front of the spurs. The capture of Flers gave us the south-eastern part of this line, and the last days of September and the first of October were occupied in winning the remainder of it. On 29th September a single company of the 23rd Division carried the farm of Destremont, some 400 yards south-west of Le Sars and just north of the Albert–Bapaume road. On the afternoon of 1st October we advanced on a front of 3,000 yards, taking the Flers line north of Destremont, while the 47th Division occupied the buildings of the

old abbey of Eaucourt, less than a mile south-east of Le Sars village. Here for several days remnants of the 6th Bavarian Division made a stout resistance. On the morning of 2nd October the enemy had regained a footing in the abbey, and during the whole of the next day and night the battle fluctuated. It was not till the morning of the 4th that we finally cleared the place, and on 6th October the mill north-west of it was won. On the afternoon of 7th October—a day of cloud and strong winds, but free from rain—we attacked on a broader front, while the French on our right moved against the key position of Sailly-Saillisel. After a heavy struggle the 23rd Division captured Le Sars and won positions to the east and west of it, while our line was considerably advanced between Gueudecourt and Lesbœufs.

From that date for a month we struggled up the slopes, gaining ground, but never winning the crests. The enemy now followed a new practice. He had his machine guns well back in prepared positions and caught our attack with their long-range fire. We wrestled for odd lengths of fantastically named trenches which were often three feet deep in water. It was no light job to get out over the slimy parapets, and the bringing up of supplies and the evacuation of the wounded placed a terrible burden on our strength. Under conditions of such grievous discomfort an attack on a comprehensive scale was out of the question, the more when we remember the condition of the area behind our lines. At one moment it seemed as if the Butte had been won. On 5th November we were over it, and holding positions on the eastern side; but that night a counter-attack by fresh troops of the 4th Guard Division—who had just come up—forced us to fall back. This was the one successful enemy counter-stroke in this stage of the battle. For the most part they were too weak, if delivered promptly; and when they came later in strength they were broken up by our guns.

The struggle of those days deserves to rank high in the records of British hardihood. The fighting had not the swift pace and the brilliant successes of the September battles. Our men had to strive for minor objectives, and such a task lacks the impetus and exhilaration of a great combined assault. On many occasions the battle resolved itself into isolated struggles, a handful of men in a mud hole holding out and consolidating their ground till their post was linked up with our main front. Rain, cold, slow reliefs, the absence of hot food, and sometimes of any food at all, made those episodes a severe test of endurance and devotion. During this period the

enemy, amazed at his good fortune, inasmuch as the weather had crippled our advance, fell into a flamboyant mood and represented the result as a triumph of the fighting quality of his own troops. From day to day he announced a series of desperate British assaults invariably repulsed with heavy losses. He spoke of British corps and divisions advancing in massed formation, when, at the most, it had been an affair of a few battalions. Often he announced an attack on a day and in a locality where nothing whatever had happened. It is to be noted that, except for the highly successful action of 21st October, presently to be recorded, there was no British attack during the month on anything like a large scale, and that the various minor actions, so far from having cost us high, were among the most economical of the campaign.

Our second task, in which we brilliantly succeeded, was to master completely the Thiepval ridge. By the end of September the strong redoubts north-east of the village—called Stuff and Zollern—were in our hands, and on the 28th of that month we had carried the southern face of Schwaben Redoubt. It was Schwaben to which the heroic advance of the Ulster Division had penetrated on the first day of the battle; but next day the advanced posts had been drawn in, and three months had elapsed before we again entered it. It was now a very different place from 1st July. Our guns had pounded it out of recognition; but it remained—from its situation—the pivot of the whole German line on the heights. Thence the trenches called Stuff and Regina ran east for some 5,000 yards to a point north-east of Courcelette. These trenches, representing many of the dominating points of the ridge south of the Ancre, were defended by the enemy with the most admirable tenacity. Between 30th September and 20th October, while we were battling for the remainder of Schwaben, he delivered not less than eleven counter-attacks against our front in that neighbourhood—counter-attacks which in every case were repulsed with heavy losses. His front was held by the 26th Reserve Division and by Marines of the Naval Division, who had been brought down from the Yser, and who gave a better account of themselves than their previous record had led us to expect. A captured German regimental order, dated 20th October, emphasized the necessity of regaining the Schwaben Redoubt. "Men are to be informed by their immediate superiors that this attack is not merely a matter of retaking a trench because it was formerly in German possession, but that the recapture of an extremely important point is involved. If the enemy remains on the ridge, he can blow our

artillery in the Ancre valley to pieces, and the protection of the infantry will then be destroyed."

From 20th to 23rd October there came a short spell of fine weather. There was frost at night, a strong easterly wind dried the ground, and the air conditions were perfect for observation. The enemy was quick to take advantage of the change, and early on the morning of Saturday, 21st October, delivered that attack upon the Schwaben Redoubt for which the order quoted above was a preparation. The attack was made in strength, and at all points but two was repulsed by our fire before reaching our lines. At two points the Germans entered our trenches, but were promptly driven out, leaving many dead in front of our positions, and five officers and seventy-nine other ranks prisoners in our hands.

This counter-stroke came opportunely for us, for it enabled us to catch the enemy on the rebound. We struck shortly after noon, attacking against the whole length of the Regina Trench, with the 39th, 15th, and 18th Divisions on our left and centre and the 4th Canadian Division on our right. The attack was completely successful, for the enemy, disorganized by his failure of the morning, was in no condition for prolonged resistance. We attained all our objectives, taking the whole of Stuff and Regina trenches, pushing out advanced posts well to the north and north-east of Schwaben Redoubt, and establishing our position on the crown of the ridge between the upper Ancre and Courcelette. In the course of the day we took nearly 1,100 prisoners at the expense of less than 1,200 casualties, many of which were extremely slight.

There still remained one small section of the ridge where our position was unsatisfactory. This was at the extreme eastern end of Regina Trench, just west of the Bapaume road. Its capture was achieved on the night of 10th November, when the 4th Canadian Division carried it on a front of 1,000 yards. This rounded off our gains and allowed us to dominate the upper valley of the Ancre and the uplands beyond it behind the unbroken German first line from Beaumont Hamel to Serre.

Meantime, during the month, the French armies on our right had pressed forward. At the end of September they had penetrated into St. Pierre Vaast Wood, whose labyrinthine depths extended east of Rancourt and south of Saillisel. The immediate object of the forces under Foch was to co-operate with the British advance by taking the height of Sailly-Saillisel, and so to work round Mont St. Quentin, the main defence of Péronne on the north. On 4th October they carried the German intermediate line between

Morval and St. Pierre Vaast Wood, and on 8th October—in a splendid movement—they swept up the Sailly-Saillisel slopes and won the Bapaume–Péronne road to a point 200 yards from its northern entry into the village. On 10th October Micheler's Tenth Army was in action on a front of three miles, and carried the western outskirts of Ablaincourt and the greater part of the wood north-west of Chaulnes, taking nearly 1,300 prisoners. On the 15th Fayolle pushed east of Bouchavesnes, and on the same day, south of the Somme, Micheler, after beating off a counter-attack, carried a mile and a quarter of the German front west of Belloy, and advanced well to the north-east of Ablaincourt, taking some 1,000 prisoners. This brought the French nearer to the ridge of Villers-Carbonnel, behind which the German batteries played the same part for the southern defence of Péronne as Mont St. Quentin did for the northern.

Next day Sailly-Saillisel was entered and occupied as far as the cross-roads, the Saillisel section of the village on the road running eastwards being still in German hands. For the next few days the enemy delivered violent counter-attacks from both north and east, using liquid fire; but they failed to oust the garrison, and that part of the village held by the Germans was mercilessly pounded by the French guns. On the 21st the newly arrived 2nd Bavarian Division made a desperate attack from the southern border of Saillisel and the ridge north-east of St. Pierre Vaast Wood, but failed with many losses. There were other heavy and fruitless counter-strokes south of the Somme in the regions of Biaches and Chaulnes. The month closed with the French holding Sailly but not Saillisel; holding the western skirts of St. Pierre Vaast Wood, and south of the river outflanking Ablaincourt and Chaulnes.

III.

On 9th November the weather improved. The wind swung round to the north and the rain ceased, but owing to the season of the year the ground was slow to dry, and in the area of the Fourth Army the roads were still past praying for. Presently frost came and a powder of snow, and then once more the rain. But in the few days of comparatively good conditions the British Commander-in-Chief brought the battle to a further stage, and won a conspicuous victory.

On the first day of July, as we have seen, our attack had failed on the eight miles between Gommecourt and Thiepval. For four

months we drove far into the heart of the German defences farther south, but the stubborn enemy front before Beaumont Hamel and Serre remained untried. The position was immensely strong, and its holders—not without reason—believed it to be impregnable. All the slopes were tunnelled deep with old catacombs—many of them made originally as hiding-places in the Wars of Religion—and these had been linked up by passages to constitute a subterranean city, where whole battalions could be assembled. There were endless redoubts and strong points armed with machine guns, as we knew to our cost in July, and the wire entanglements were on a scale which had never been paralleled. Looked at from our first line they resembled a solid wall of red rust. Very strong, too, were the sides of the Ancre, should we seek to force a passage that way, and the hamlets of Beaucourt and St. Pierre Divion, one on each bank, were fortresses of the Beaumont Hamel stamp. From Gommecourt to the Thiepval ridge the enemy positions were the old first-line ones, prepared during two years of leisure, and not the improvised defences on which they had been thrown back between Thiepval and Chaulnes.

At the beginning of November the area of the Allied pressure was over thirty miles, but we had never lost sight of the necessity of widening the breach. It was desirable, with a view to the winter warfare, that the enemy should be driven out of his prepared defences on the broadest possible front. The scheme of an assault upon the Serre–Ancre line might seem a desperate one so late in the season, but we had learned much since 1st July, and, as compared with that date, we had now certain real advantages. In the first place our whole tactical use of artillery had undergone a change. Our creeping barrage, moving in front of advancing infantry, protected them to a great extent against the machine-gun fusillade from parapets and shell holes which had been our undoing in the earlier battle, and assisted them in keeping direction. In the second place our possession of the whole Thiepval ridge seriously outflanked the German front north of the Ancre. In the dips of the high ground behind Serre and Beaumont Hamel their batteries had been skilfully emplaced in the beginning of July, and they had been able to devote their whole energy to the attack coming from the west. But now they were facing southward and operating against our lines on the Thiepval ridge, and we commanded them to some extent by possessing the higher ground and the better observation. If, therefore, we should attack again from the west, supported also by our artillery fire

from the south, the enemy guns would be fighting on two fronts. The German position in July had been a straight line; it was now a salient.

We had another asset for a November assault. The slow progress of the Fourth Army during October had led the enemy to conclude that our offensive had ceased for the winter. Drawing a natural deduction from the condition of the country, he argued that an attack on a grand scale was physically impossible, especially an attack upon a fortress which had defied our efforts when we advanced with fresh troops and unwearied impetus in the height of summer. But the area from Thiepval northward did not suffer from transport difficulties in the same degree as the southern terrain. Since we would be advancing from what was virtually our old front line, we would escape the problem of crossing five or six miles of shell-torn ground by roads ploughed up and broken from four months' traffic.

It is necessary to grasp the topographical features of the new battle-ground. From north of the Schwaben Redoubt our front curved sharply to the north-west, crossing the Ancre 500 yards south of the hamlet of St. Pierre Divion, and extending northward along the foot of the slopes on which lay the villages of Beaumont Hamel and Serre. From the high ground north-west of the Ancre several clearly marked spurs descended to the upper valley of that stream. The chief was a long ridge with Serre at its western extremity, the village of Puisieux on the north, Beaucourt-sur-Ancre on the south, and Miraumont at the eastern end. South of this there was another feature running from a point a thousand yards north of Beaumont Hamel to the village of Beaucourt. This latter spur had on its south-west side a shallow depression up which runs the Beaucourt–Beaumont Hamel road, and it was defined on the north-east by the Beaucourt–Serre road. All the right bank of the Ancre was thus a country of slopes and pockets. On the left bank there was a stretch of flattish ground under the Thiepval ridge extending up the valley past St. Pierre Divion to Grandcourt.

On Sunday, 12th November, Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army held the area from Gommecourt in the north to the Albert–Bapaume road. Opposite Serre and extending south to a point just north of Beaumont Hamel lay the 31st, 3rd, and 2nd Divisions. In front of Beaumont Hamel was the 51st (Highland Territorial) Division. They had been more than eighteen months in France, and at the end of July and the beginning of August had spent seventeen days in the line at High Wood. On their right, from a point just south

of the famous Y Ravine to the Ancre, lay the 63rd (Naval) Division, which had had a long record of fighting from Antwerp to Gallipoli, but now for the first time took part in an action on the Western front. Across the river lay the 39th and 19th Divisions. The boundary of the attack on the right was roughly defined by the Thiepval–Grandcourt road.

The British guns began on the morning of Saturday, the 11th, a bombardment devoted to the destruction of the enemy's wire and parapets. It went on fiercely during Sunday, but did not increase to hurricane fire, so that the enemy had no warning of the hour of our attack. In the darkness of the early morning of Monday, 13th November, the fog gathered thick—a cold, raw vapour which wrapped the ground like a garment. It was still black darkness, darker even than the usual moonless winter night, when, at 5.45 a.m., our troops crossed the parapets. The attack had been most carefully planned, but in that dense shroud it was hard for the best trained soldiers to keep direction. On the other hand the enemy had no warning of our coming till our men were surging over his trenches.

The attack of the British left wing on Serre failed, as it had failed on 1st July. That stronghold, being farther removed from the effect of our flanking fire from the Thiepval ridge, presented all the difficulties which had baffled us at the first attempt. South of it and north of Beaumont Hamel we carried the German first position and swept beyond the fortress called the Quadrilateral—which had proved too hard a knot to unravel four months earlier. This gave us the northern part of the under feature which we have noted as running south-east to Beaucourt. Our right wing had a triumphant progress. Almost at once it gained its objectives. St. Pierre Divion fell early in the morning, and the 39th Division engaged there advanced a mile and took nearly 1,400 prisoners at a total cost of less than 600 casualties. By the evening they were holding the Hansa line, which ran from the neighbourhood of Stuff Trench on the heights to the bank of the river opposite Beaucourt.

But it was on the doings of the two centre divisions that the fortune of the day depended. The Highland Territorials—a kilted division except for their lowland Pioneer battalion—had one of the hardest tasks that had faced troops in the battle, a task comparable to the taking of Contalmaison and Guillemont and Delville Wood. They had before them the fortress-village of Beaumont Hamel itself. South of it lay the strong Ridge Redoubt, and south

again the **Y** Ravine, whose prongs projected down to the German front line and whose tail ran back towards Station Road south of the Cemetery. This **Y** Ravine was some 800 yards long, and in places 30 feet deep, with overhanging sides. In its precipitous banks were the entrances to the German dug-outs, completely screened from shell-fire and connecting farther back by means of tunnels with the great catacombs. Such a position allowed reinforcements to be sent up underground, even though we might be holding all the sides. The four successive German lines were so skilfully linked up subterraneously that they formed virtually a single line, no part of which could be considered to be captured till the whole was taken. The first assault took the Scots through the German defences on all their front, except just before the ends of the **Y** Ravine. They advanced on both sides of that gully and carried the third enemy line shortly after daybreak. There was much stern fighting in the honeycombed land, but early in the forenoon they had pushed right through the German main position and were pressing beyond Station Road and the hollow where the village lay towards their ultimate objective—the Beaucourt–Serre road. The chief fighting of the day centred round **Y** Ravine. So soon as we had gained the third line on both sides of it our men leaped down the steep sides into the gully. Then followed a desperate struggle, for the entrances to the dug-outs had been obscured by our bombardment, and no man knew from what direction the enemy might appear. About mid-day the eastern part of the ravine was full of our men, but the Germans were in the prongs. Early in the afternoon we delivered a fresh attack from the west and gradually forced the defence to surrender. After that it became a battle of *nettoyeurs*, small parties digging out Germans from underground lairs—for the very strength of his fortifications proved a trap to the enemy once they had been breached.

On their right the Naval Division advanced against Beaucourt, attacking over the ground which had been partly covered by the left of the Ulster Division on 1st July. On that day the British trenches had been between 500 and 700 yards from the German front line, leaving too great an extent of no-man's-land to be covered by the attacking infantry. But before the present action the Naval Division had dug advanced trenches, and now possessed a line of departure not more than 250 yards from the enemy. Their first objective was the German support line, their second Station Road—which ran from Beaumont Hamel to the main

Albert–Lille railway—and their third the trench line outside Beaucourt village. The wave of assault carried the men over the first two German lines, and for a moment it looked as if the advance was about to go smoothly forward to its goal. But in the centre of our front of attack, in a communication trench between the second and third German lines and about 800 yards from the river bank, was a very strong redoubt manned by machine guns. This had not been touched by our artillery, and it effectively blocked the centre of our advance, while at the same time flanking fire from the slopes behind Beaumont Hamel checked our left. Various parties got through and reached the German support line and even as far as Station Road. But at about 8.30 the situation, as reviewed by the divisional commander, bore an ominous likeness to what had happened to the Ulstermen on 1st July. Isolated detachments had gone forward, but the enemy had manned his reserve trenches behind them, and the formidable redoubt was blocking any general progress.

At this moment there came news by a pigeon message of the right battalion. It had gone clean through to the third objective, and was now waiting outside Beaucourt village for our barrage to lift in order to take the place. Its commander had led his men along the brink of the river to Station Road, where he had collected odd parties of other battalions, and at 8.21 had reached Beaucourt Trench—a mile distant from our front of assault. All that day a precarious avenue of communication for food and ammunition was kept open along the edge of the stream, under such shelter as the banks afforded. A second attack on the whole front was delivered in the afternoon by the supporting brigade of the Naval Division, but this, too, was held up by the redoubt, though again a certain number got through and reached Station Road and even the slopes beyond it. That night it was resolved to make a great effort to put the redoubt out of action. Two tanks were brought up, one of which succeeded at dawn in getting within range, and the garrison of the stronghold hoisted the white flag. The way was now clear for a general advance next morning, to assist in which a brigade of another division was brought up in support. Part of the advance lost direction, but the result was to clear the German first position and the ground between Station Road and Beaucourt Trench. At the same time the right battalion, which had been waiting outside Beaucourt for twenty-four hours, assisted by a Territorial battalion and by details from its own division, carried the place by storm. The success was an instructive proof of the value of holding forward positions even though flanks and rear

were threatened, if there was any certainty of supports. Like the doings of the 15th Division at Loos, it pointed the way to a new form of tactics, but the lesson was read more correctly by the enemy than by the Allies.

By the night of Tuesday, 14th November, our total of prisoners on the five-mile front of battle was well over 5,000. The German counter-attack of the 15th failed to win back any ground. Just east of Beaumont Hamel there was an extensive no-man's-land, for Munich Trench could not be claimed by either side, but in the Beaucourt area we steadily pressed on. On Thursday, the 16th, we pushed east from Beaucourt village along the north bank of the Ancre, establishing posts in the Bois d'Hollande to the north-west of Grandcourt. Frost had set in, and it was possible from the Thiepval ridge or from the slopes above Hamel to see clearly the whole new battlefield, and even in places to follow the infantry advance—a thing which had not been feasible since the summer fighting. By that day our total of prisoners was over 6,000. On the 17th we again advanced, and on Saturday, the 18th, in a downpour of icy rain, the Canadians on the right of the Fifth Army, attacking from Regina Trench, moved well down the slope towards the river, while the centre pushed close to the western skirts of Grandcourt.

It was the last attack, with which concluded the Battle of the Somme. The weather had now fallen like a curtain upon the drama. The final stage was a fitting *dénouement* to the great action. It gave us three strongly fortified villages, and practically the whole of the minor spur which ran from north of Beaumont Hamel to Beaucourt. It extended the breach in the main enemy position by five miles. Our front was now far down the slopes from the Thiepval ridge and north and west of Grandcourt. We had taken well over 7,000 prisoners and vast quantities of material, including several hundred machine guns. Our losses had been comparatively slight, while those of the enemy were—on his own admission—severe. Above all, at the moment when he was beginning to argue himself into the belief that the Somme offensive was over, his calculations had been upset by an unexpected stroke. We had opened the old wound and undermined his *moral* by reviving the terrors of the unknown and the unexpected.

IV.

Before 1st July Verdun had been the greatest continuous battle fought in the world's history; but the Somme surpassed it both

ARRAS
DOULLENS
AMIENS
ALBERT
BAPAUME
PERONNE
CAMBRAI
ST QUENTIN
Montdidier
Frévent
Lucheux
Berles
Pommera
Hem
Halloy
Authieule
Gézaincourt
Candas
Beauval
Bonneville
Beauquesne
Raincheval
Puchevillers
la Vicogne
Naours
Talmas
Hérissart
Rubempre
Flesselles
Villers
Bertangles
Poulainville
Allonville
Molliens
Behencourt
Dernancourts
Meaulte
Contay
Warloy
Henencourt
Millencourt
Pierregot
Mirvaux
Baizieux
Becourt
Fricourt
Albert
Aveluy
Bouzincourt
Senlis
Martinsart
Varennes
Hedauville
Toutencourt
Harponville
Acheux
Arqueves
Lealvillers
Englebelmer
Auchonvillers
Beaumont-Hamel
Serre
Mailly-Maillet
Beaucourt
Hamel
Pierre Divion
Colincamps
Louvencourt
Bertrancourt
Courcelles
Bus
Sailly
Puisieux
Hébuterne
Couin
Famechon
Thiepval
Ovillers-la-Boisselle
Miraumont
Irles
Grandcourt
Pys
Courcelette
Martinpuich
Pozières
Bazentin-le-Petit
Bazentin-le-Grand
Longueval
Contalmaison
Montauban
Mametz
Fricourt
Carnoy
Hardecourt
Maricourt
Curlu
Suzanne
Bray
Cappy
Frise
Feuillères
Herbécourt
Becquincourt
Dompierre-Bussus
Flaucourt
Barleux
Assevillers
Belloy
Estrees
Dompierre
Soyecourt
Berny
Ablaincourt
Vermandovillers
Pressoires
Marchélepot
Lihons
Chaulnes
Licourt
Epénancourt
Pertain
Omiécourt
Morchain
Bethencourt
Matigny
Douilly
Pargny
Croix-Molignaux
Ugny
Germaine
Fluquieres
Douchy
Roupy
Fontaine
Castres
Contescourt
Bellon
Tugny
Urvillers
Essigny
Cerisy
Benay
Gibercourt
Remigny
Clastres
Hinacourt
Artemps
Happencourt
Gd Seraucourt
Aubigny
Bray
Voyennes
Offoy
Nesle
Hattencourt
Liancourt
Hallu
Chilly
Vrély
Méharicourt
Warvillers
Rouvroy
Quesnel
Mézières
Beaucourt
Castel
Guyencourt
Morisel
Moreuil
Rouvrel
Jumel
Ailly sur Noye
Oresmaux
St. Sauflieu
Mailly Raineval
la Neuville
Plessier
Hangest
Arvillers
Bouchoir
le Quesnoy
Fresnoy
Damery
Braches
Contoire
Aubvillers
Hargicourt
Sourdon
Lawarde
Hallivillers
Erches
Andechy
Davenescourt
Guerbigny
Roye
Champien
Bois de Champien
Grivesnes
Gratibous
Fignières
Cantigny
Courtemanche
Rocquencourt
Mesnil St. Georges
Moyencourt
Esmery Hallon
Muille Villette
Eaucourt
Cugny
Flavy
Jussy
Golancourt
Ercheu
Libermont
Villeselve
Beaumont
Mennessis
Liez
Frieres Faillouel
Berlancourt
Freniches
Guiscard
Guivry
Ugny
Commenchon
Tergnier
Noyon
Chauny
Roisel
Tincourt
Doingt
Cartigny
Hancourt
Bernes
Vendelles
Jeancourt
Bellenglise
Levergies
Bouvincourt
Maissemy
Gricourt
Omissy
Vermand
Caulaincourt
Selency
Holnon
Francilly
Tertry
Athies
Monchy Lagache
Beauvois
Etreillers
Savy
Villers St Christophe
Aubigny
Bray
Estrees
Villers Carbonnel
Brie
St Christ
Cizancourt
Templeux la Fosse
Longavesnes
Villers-Faucon
Roussoy
Hargicourt
Villeret
Bellicourt
Estrées
Nauroy
Leuze
Gouy
le Catelet
Lempire
Lieramont
Vendhuille
Banteux
Banteuzelle
Gouzeaucourt
Villers Guislain
Honnecourt
Aubencheul
Villers Outréaux
Heudicourt
Epehy
Nurlu
Metz-en-Couture
Trescault
Havrincourt
Flesquieres
Graincourt
Rumilly
Masnières
Crevecoeur-sur-Escaut
Lesdain
Esnes
Séranvillers
Mœuvres
Bourlon
Escadœuvres
Haynecourt
Marquion
Sauchy-Lestrée
Bantigny
Oisy le Verger
Aubigny
Féchain
March
Wasnes
Ecourt St Quentin
Dury
Eterpigny
Remy
Boiry
Monchy
Lécluse
Tortequenne
Sailly
Pelves
Feuchy
Tilloy-les-Mofflaines
Athies
Fampoux
Rœux
Beaurains
Guémappe
Neuville
Wancourt
Vis
Héninel
St Martin Cherisy
Henin
Fontaine
Boisleux-St Marc
Boiry
Boyelles
Croisilles
Hendecourt
Riencourt
Bullecourt
Ecoust St Mein
Gueant
Pronville
Lagnicourt
Morchies
Vaulx
Behagnies
Sapignies
Achiet-le-Grand
Bihucourt
Bucquoy
Ablainzeville
Courcelles
Ervillers
Mory
Hamelincourt
St Leger
Moyenneville
Ayette
Douchy
Monchy
Blenvillers
Hannescamps
Warlincourt
Gaudiempré
Grincourt
St Amand
Souastre
Fonquevillers
Gommecourt
Pas
Henu
Adinfer
Humbercamp
Pommier
Berles
Barly
Neuvillette
Remaisnil
Mézerolles
Grouches
Pommera
Humbercamp
Coullemont
Coutrelle
Laherlière
la Cauchie
Humbercourt
Sailly
Bavincourt
Barlieulval
Barlieulmont
Ransart
Hendecourt
Blaireville
Ficheux
Wailly
Agny
Achicourt
Dainville
Warlus
Wanquetin
Berneville
Simencourt
Gouy
Beaumetz
Riviere
Sorrabrin
Warluzel
Sus
Ivergny
Beaudricourt
Grand Rullecourt
Rebreuviette
Bonnieres
Villers
Ile Seulich
Brevillers
Forêt de Lucheux
Bois du Parc
Couin
Bayencourt
Coigneux
Hébuterne
Sailly
Puisieux
Achiet-le-Petit
Irles
Grevillers
Loupart Wood
Thilloy
Ligny-Thilloy
Le Barque
Warlencourt-Eaucourt
Bapaume
Riencourt
Haplincourt
Beaulencourt
Barastre
Bus
Ytres
Neuville
Le Transloy
Rocquigny
Lesbœufs
Morval
Sailly-Saillisel
Manancourt
Equancourt
Fins
Combles
Fregicourt
Guillemont
Longueval
Ginchy
Rancourt
Le Forest
Maurepas
Hopital Fm
Cléry
Monacu Farm
Curlu
Hem
Vaux
Feuillères
Frise
Eclusier
Peronne
Bussu
Tincourt
Roisel
Hesbécourt
Templeux la Fosse
Longavesnes
Villers-Faucon
Roussoy
Hargicourt
Villeret
Bellicourt
Estrées
Nauroy
Leuze
Gouy
le Catelet
Lempire
Lieramont
Vendhuille
Banteux
Banteuzelle
Gouzeaucourt
Villers Guislain
Honnecourt
Aubencheul
Villers Outréaux
Heudicourt
Epehy
Nurlu
Metz-en-Couture
Trescault
Havrincourt
Flesquieres
Graincourt
Rumilly
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Crevecoeur-sur-Escaut
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Séranvillers
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Escadœuvres
Haynecourt
Marquion
Sauchy-Lestrée
Bantigny
Oisy le Verger
Aubigny
Féchain
March
Wasnes
Ecourt St Quentin
Dury
Eterpigny
Remy
Boiry
Monchy
Lécluse
Tortequenne
Sailly
Pelves
Feuchy
Tilloy-les-Mofflaines
Athies
Fampoux
Rœux
Beaurains
Guémappe
Neuville
Wancourt
Vis
Héninel
St Martin Cherisy
Henin
Fontaine
Boisleux-St Marc
Boiry
Boyelles
Croisilles
Hendecourt
Riencourt
Bullecourt
Ecoust St Mein
Gueant
Pronville
Lagnicourt
Morchies
Vaulx
Behagnies
Sapignies
Achiet-le-Grand
Bihucourt
Bucquoy
Ablainzeville
Courcelles
Ervillers
Mory
Hamelincourt
St Leger
Moyenneville
Ayette
Douchy
Monchy
Blenvillers
Hannescamps
Warlincourt
Gaudiempré
Grincourt
St Amand
Souastre
Fonquevillers
Gommecourt
Pas
Henu
Adinfer
Humbercamp
Pommier
Berles
Barly
Neuvillette
Remaisnil
Mézerolles
Grouches
Pommera
Humbercamp
Coullemont
Coutrelle
Laherlière
la Cauchie
Humbercourt
Sailly
Bavincourt
Barlieulval
Barlieulmont
Ransart
Hendecourt
Blaireville
Ficheux
Wailly
Agny
Achicourt
Dainville
Warlus
Wanquetin
Berneville
Simencourt
Gouy
Beaumetz
Riviere
Sorrabrin
Warluzel
Sus
Ivergny
Beaudricourt
Grand Rullecourt
Rebreuviette
Bonnieres
Villers
Ile Seulich
Brevillers
Forêt de Lucheux
Bois du Parc
Lucheux
Berles
Pommera
Hem
Halloy
Authieule
Gézaincourt
Candas
Beauval
Bonneville
Beauquesne
Raincheval
Puchevillers
la Vicogne
Naours
Talmas
Hérissart
Rubempre
Flesselles
Villers
Bertangles
Poulainville
Allonville
Molliens
Behencourt
Dernancourts
Meaulte
Contay
Warloy
Henencourt
Millencourt
Pierregot
Mirvaux
Baizieux
Becourt
Fricourt
Albert
Aveluy
Bouzincourt
Senlis
Martinsart
Varennes
Hedauville
Toutencourt
Harponville
Acheux
Arqueves
Lealvillers
Englebelmer
Auchonvillers
Beaumont-Hamel
Serre
Mailly-Maillet
Beaucourt
Hamel
Pierre Divion
Colincamps
Louvencourt
Bertrancourt
Courcelles
Bus
Sailly
Puisieux
Hébuterne
Couin
Famechon
Thiepval
Ovillers-la-Boisselle
Miraumont
Irles
Grandcourt
Pys
Courcelette
Martinpuich
Pozières
Bazentin-le-Petit
Bazentin-le-Grand
Longueval
Contalmaison
Montauban
Mametz
Fricourt
Carnoy
Hardecourt
Maricourt
Curlu
Suzanne
Bray
Cappy
Frise
Feuillères
Herbécourt
Becquincourt
Dompierre-Bussus
Flaucourt
Barleux
Assevillers
Belloy
Estrees
Dompierre
Soyecourt
Berny
Ablaincourt
Vermandovillers
Pressoires
Marchélepot
Lihons
Chaulnes
Licourt
Epénancourt
Pertain
Omiécourt
Morchain
Bethencourt
Matigny
Douilly
Pargny
Croix-Molignaux
Ugny
Germaine
Fluquieres
Douchy
Roupy
Fontaine
Castres
Contescourt
Bellon
Tugny
Urvillers
Essigny
Cerisy
Benay
Gibercourt
Remigny
Clastres
Hinacourt
Artemps
Happencourt
Gd Seraucourt
Aubigny
Bray
Voyennes
Offoy
Nesle
Hattencourt
Liancourt
Hallu
Chilly
Vrély
Méharicourt
Warvillers
Rouvroy
Quesnel
Mézières
Beaucourt
Castel
Guyencourt
Morisel
Moreuil
Rouvrel
Jumel
Ailly sur Noye
Oresmaux
St. Sauflieu
Mailly Raineval
la Neuville
Plessier
Hangest
Arvillers
Bouchoir
le Quesnoy
Fresnoy
Damery
Braches
Contoire
Aubvillers
Hargicourt
Sourdon
Lawarde
Hallivillers
Erches
Andechy
Davenescourt
Guerbigny
Roye
Champien
Bois de Champien
Grivesnes
Gratibous
Fignières
Cantigny
Courtemanche
Rocquencourt
Mesnil St. Georges
Montdidier
Moyencourt
Esmery Hallon
Muille Villette
Eaucourt
Cugny
Flavy
Jussy
Golancourt
Ercheu
Libermont
Villeselve
Beaumont
Mennessis
Liez
Frieres Faillouel
Berlancourt
Freniches
Guiscard
Guivry
Ugny
Commenchon
Tergnier
Noyon
Chauny
Roisel
Tincourt
Doingt
Cartigny
Hancourt
Bernes
Vendelles
Jeancourt
Bellenglise
Levergies
Bouvincourt
Maissemy
Gricourt
Omissy
Vermand
Caulaincourt
Selency
Holnon
Francilly
Tertry
Athies
Monchy Lagache
Beauvois
Etreillers
Savy
Villers St Christophe
Aubigny
Bray
Estrees
Villers Carbonnel
Brie
St Christ
Cizanc

in numbers of men engaged, in the tactical difficulty of the objectives, and in its importance in the strategical scheme of the campaign. Its significance may be judged by the way in which it preoccupied the enemy High Command. It was the fashion in Germany to describe it as a futile attack upon an unshakable fortress, an attack which might be disregarded by her public opinion while she continued her true business of conquest in the East. But the fact remained that the great bulk of the German troops and by far the best of them were kept congregated in this area. In November Germany had 127 divisions on the Western front, and no more than 75 in the East. Though Brussilov's attack and Falkenhayn's Rumanian expedition compelled her to send fresh troops eastward, she did not diminish but increased her strength in the West. In June she had fourteen divisions on the Somme; in November she had in line or just out of it well over forty.

By what test are we to judge the result of a battle in modern war? In the old days of open fighting there was little room for doubt, since the retreat or rout or envelopment of the beaten army was too clear for argument. Now, when the total battle-front was 3,000 miles, such easy proofs were lacking; but the principle remained the same. A battle is final when it ends in the destruction of the enemy's fighting strength. A battle is won—and it may be decisively won—when it results in achieving the strategic purpose of one of the combatants, provided that purpose is, on military grounds, a wise one. Hence the amount of territory occupied and the number of important points captured are not necessarily sound criteria at all. The success or defeat of a strategic purpose, that is the sole test. Judging by this, Tannenberg was a victory for Germany, the Marne for France, and the First Battle of Ypres for Britain. The Battle of the Somme was no less a victory, since it achieved the purpose of the Allies.

In the first place, it relieved Verdun, and enabled Nivelle to advance presently to a conspicuous success. In the second place, it detained the main German forces on the Western front. In the third place, it drew into the battle, and gravely depleted, the surplus man-power of the enemy, and struck a shattering blow at his *moral*. For two years the German behind the shelter of his trench-works and the great engine of his artillery had fought with comparatively little cost against opponents far less well equipped. The Somme put the shoe on the other foot, and he came to know what the British learned at Ypres and the French in Artois—what it meant to be bombarded out of existence, and to cling to

shell-holes and the ruins of trenches under a pitiless fire. It was a new thing in his experience, and took the heart out of men who, under other conditions, had fought with skill and courage. Further, the Allies had dislocated his whole military machine. Their ceaseless pressure had crippled his staff work, and confused the organization of which he had justly boasted. Haig's sober summary was true. "The enemy's power has not yet been broken, nor is it yet possible to form an estimate of the time the war may last before the objects for which the Allies are fighting have been attained. But the Somme battle has placed beyond doubt the ability of the Allies to gain these objects. The German army is the mainstay of the Central Powers, and a full half of that army, despite all the advantages of the defensive, supported by the strongest fortifications, suffered defeat on the Somme this year. Neither the victors nor the vanquished will forget this; and, though bad weather has given the enemy a respite, there will undoubtedly be many thousands in his ranks who will begin the new campaign with little confidence in their ability to resist our assaults or to overcome our defence."

Let it be freely granted that Germany met the strain in a soldierly fashion. She set herself at once to learn the lessons of the battle and to revise her methods where revision was needed. She made drastic changes in her High Commands. She endeavoured still further to exploit her already much-exploited manpower, and combed out even from vital industries every man who was capable of taking the field. Her effort was magnificent—and it was war. She had created since 1st July some thirty odd new divisions, formed partly by converting garrison units into field troops, and partly by regrouping units from existing formations—taking a regiment away from a four-regiment division, and a battalion from a four-battalion regiment, and withdrawing the Jäger battalions. But these changes, though they increased the number of her units, did not add proportionately to the aggregate of her numerical strength, and we may take 100,000 men as the maximum of the total gain in field troops from this readjustment. Moreover, she had to provide artillery and staffs for each of the new divisions, which involved a heavy strain upon services already taxed to the full. Her commissioned classes had been sorely depleted. "The shortage," so ran an order of Hindenburg's in September, "due to our heavy casualties, of experienced, energetic, and well-trained junior officers is sorely felt at the present time."

The Battle of the Somme had, therefore, fulfilled the Allied purpose in taxing to the uttermost the German war machine. It tried the command, it tried the nation at home, and it tried to the last limit of endurance the men in the line. The place became a name of terror. Though belittled in communiqués, and rarely mentioned in the press, it was a word of ill-omen to the whole German people, that " blood-bath " to which many journeyed and from which few returned. Of what avail their easy conquests on the Danube when this deadly cancer in the West was eating into the vitals of the nation? Winter might give a short respite—though the Battle of the Ancre had been fought in winter weather—but spring would come, and the evil would grow malignant again. Germany gathered herself for a great effort, marshalling for compulsory war work the whole male population between seventeen and sixty, sending every man to the trenches who could walk on sound feet, doling out food supplies on the minimum scale for the support of life, and making desperate efforts by submarine warfare to cripple her enemies' strength. She was driven to stake her last resources on the game.

In every great action there is a major purpose, a reasoned and calculated purpose which takes no account of the accidents of fortune. But in most actions there come sudden strokes of luck which turn the scale. For such strokes a general has a right to hope, but on them he dare not build. Marengo, Waterloo, Chancellorsville—most of the great battles of other times—showed these gifts of destiny. But in the elaborate and mechanical warfare of to-day they come rarely, and at the Battle of the Somme they did not fall to the lot of Foch or Haig. They did what they set out to do; step by step they drove their way through the German defences; but it was all done by hard and stubborn fighting, without any bounty from capricious fortune. Germany had claimed that her line was impregnable; they broke it again and again. She had counted on her artillery machine; they crippled and outmatched it. She had decried the fighting stuff of the new British armies; we showed that it was a match for her Guards and Brandenburgers.* The major purpose was attained. Like some harsh and remorseless chemical, the waxing Allied energy was eating into the German waning mass. Its sure and methodical pressure had the inevitability of a natural law. It was attrition, but attrition

* Between 1st July and 18th November the British on the Somme took just over 38,000 prisoners, including 800 officers, 29 heavy guns, 96 field guns, 136 trench mortars, and 514 machine guns.

in the acute form—not like the slow erosion of cliffs by the sea, but like the steady crumbling of a mountain to which hydraulic engineers have applied a mighty head of water. And it was a law of life and of war that the weakness of the less strong would grow *pari passu* with the power of the stronger.

The tactics and strategy of the Allies at the Somme were those natural to armies which had a great preponderance in men and munitions. The method of laborious attrition presupposed the continuance of the war on two fronts. Should Russia fall out of line, the situation would be radically changed, and the plan would become futile against an enemy with a large new reservoir of recruitment. But at the time of its inception, uninspired and expensive as it might be, it was a sound plan, and *cæteris paribus* would have given the Allies victory before the end of 1917. Even as things befell, the battle was not fought in vain, for it struck a blow at the heart of Germany's strength from which she never wholly recovered. Let Ludendorff himself describe the situation at the close: "Our position was uncommonly difficult, and a way out hard to find. We could not contemplate an offensive ourselves, having to keep our reserves available for defence. . . . If the war lasted our defeat seemed inevitable." *

* *My War Memories* (Eng. trans.), I., p. 307.

CHAPTER LXIV.

RUMANIA'S CAMPAIGN.

August 27–December 6, 1916.

Rumania's strategical Problems—Her mistaken Policy—The Advance into Transylvania—Falkenhayn prepares his Counter-stroke—Mackensen in the Dobrudja—The Rumanians fall back across the Mountains—Last Stage of Brussilov's Attack—Mackensen crosses the Danube—German Occupation of Wallachia—Fall of Bucharest.

(*Map*, p. 252.)

THE Rumanian declaration of war, issued at nine o'clock on the evening of 27th August, was accompanied by an order for a general mobilization. This was no more than a formality to recall officers and men still on leave, and to summon second-line troops to guard the railways. For months mobilization had been in progress, and such strength as Rumania possessed was ready to her hand when, her harvest over, she made the great decision. Next day, 28th August, at eighteen points her troops had crossed the Transylvanian border.

Before entering on the details of her campaign we must note the nature of the military problem now presented to her, and the resources which she possessed to meet it. Her immediate and contiguous enemies were Austria and Bulgaria, and the first point to consider is the nature of her frontier. That frontier fell naturally into three sections. From Dorna Watra in the north to Orsova on the Danube the Transylvanian plateau, rimmed by a range of mountains, jutted out like a huge bastion into her territory, almost dividing Moldavia from Wallachia. Here the border line, nearly four hundred miles in length, followed for the most part the crest of the hills. Of these the northern part is known as the Southern Carpathians and the southern as the Transylvanian Alps, but it is all one mountain system. On the Rumanian side the heights fall steeply to the wooded foothills, but on the west the slopes are easier towards the plateau. The chief peaks are from 7,000 to 8,000 feet in height, and the passes are for the most part deep winding ravines.

These passes, which were to play a great part in the campaign, are numerous; but only ten may be considered of military importance. Four of these are on the Moldavian front—the Tolgyes, served by a highway from the Austrian railhead at Toplitza; the Bekas, traversed by a bad mountain road; the Gyimes, carrying a road and a railway from Okna in Moldavia to Czik Szereda in Transylvania; and the Oitoz, with a road from Okna to the head of an Austrian branch line. Of the four all were close to the railway on the Austrian side, but only two had good Rumanian railway connections. At the angle of the salient is the Buzeu or Bodza Pass, with a railhead on the Rumanian side and a good road running to Kronstadt. Going west, follow in order the Bratocea, the Predeal or Tomos, and the Torzburg Pass, all the communications of which radiate from Kronstadt. Of these the Predeal carried the main road and railway from Kronstadt to Bucharest, and the Torzburg a road from Kronstadt to the Rumanian railhead at Kampolung. Farther west lies the Rotherthurm or Red Tower Pass, the best in the range, through which ran the road and railway from Hermannstadt to Bucharest. It is traversed by the river Aluta, which, rising close to the source of the Maros, the other great Transylvanian stream, flows south and west inside the rim of the salient, and then at the Rotherthurm breaks through the Transylvanian Alps to the Wallachian plains. Last comes the Vulkan, a road pass with a railhead at each end of it. On the Transylvanian side it gave access to the mining district of Petroseny and Hatszeg, and on the Wallachian side it opened upon the wide cornlands around Crajova.

From Orsova to near Turtukai, a distance of some 270 miles, the Rumanian frontier was the Danube. From the Iron Gates to the Delta the northern shore of the river is lower than the southern, and, being subject to constant inundations, is for the most part a chain of swamps, lakes, and backwaters. The patches of firm land can be picked out even on a small-scale map by noting the points where a town or village on the Rumanian shore faces a town or village on the Bulgarian side. These pairs of towns mark the places where for centuries there have been ferries across the river. Several were railheads, provided with wharves and facilities for handling cargo in river traffic. Below Orsova the Danube is rarely less than a mile broad, and on this stretch of frontier it was clear that military operations could not be immediately undertaken.

The last section ran from the Danube to the Black Sea across the arid plateau known as the Dobrudja. To reach it Rumania

had the good river crossings at Turtukai and Silistria, and the great bridge of Tchernavoda—the only bridge between Neusatz-Peterwardein in Hungary and the mouth of the Danube. The Dobrudja, which may be regarded as a tongue of the Balkan uplands projecting to the north-east, is a barren steppe of sand-covered limestone, unwatered and treeless. It abuts on various crossings of the Danube delta, and so has for centuries been the gate of invasion from the north, since the Goths and Slavs first swept down upon Byzantium. Those invasions have left their trail upon it, and to-day it is still inhabited by the debris of forgotten races, the flotsam and jetsam of history. Her new frontier, now pushed forty miles southward by the Treaty of Bucharest, gave Rumania a position on the flank of Bulgaria which, if she remained on the defensive, would endanger any Bulgarian attempt to cross the Danube, and, if she took the offensive, might enable her to threaten the main line of communications between Constantinople and Vienna.

Stated, therefore, in geographical terms, the situation of Rumania in a war with the Teutonic League was that on west and south she was enclosed by hostile territory. The Danube front might for the moment be neglected, and the Dobrudja front seemed to her safe from any serious attack. The main danger, in her view, lay in the Transylvanian salient. Her frontier there was in the shape of the curve of a capital D, a bad defensive line at the best, and impossible for her to hold strongly with the forces at her command. Her first interest was to shorten it. If she could reach the upright line of the D—a position represented by the central Maros valley between Maros Vasarhely and Broos—she would be safe from any serious enemy counter-offensive, and would be able either to wait with an easy mind on the development of the Russian campaign farther north, or to strike southward against the Ottoman Railway.

But in modern war a strategic position is not determined by geography alone, but mainly by those means of communication through which the industry of man has supplemented nature. In railways Rumania was far behind her enemies. Her own lines had been built largely with Austria's assistance at a time when she was Austria's ally, and at no point had their construction been devised in the light of military needs. On the western side of the mountains Austria was well supplied. A number of railways, including four first-class lines, converged on Transylvania. There were sufficient cross lines, and all were linked together by the frontier railway, which curved round the border just inside the mountains, thereby

permitting of concentration at any point for the defence of the passes, while another cross line served for concentration along the Maros valley. Besides the line at the Iron Gates, two good lines ran into the Wallachian plains, and a third into Moldavia. The whole system enabled operations to be conducted on the inside of a curved salient. The defect of the Rumanian system was that there were few lines for through movements; that the branch lines were short lengths ending in railheads near the river or the mountains; that, since most of the tracks were single, traffic capacity was limited; and that, since there was a paucity of alternative routes to any point, traffic backwards and forwards had to be carried over the one line. A Rumanian army operating against Transylvania was compelled to use a railway system which in the military sense was entirely on exterior lines, and the length of movement required to reinforce any point was excessive. Whereas the Austrians had a lateral railway between twenty and thirty miles from the frontier, the only lateral connection in Moldavia was fifty miles away, and in Wallachia still farther. From the Predeal Pass to the Rotherthurm Pass troops could be moved on the Austrian side by a railway journey of eighty miles, but the same problem for Rumania meant a detour of nearly three hundred.

The situation elsewhere on the border was little better. No railway line could follow the swampy northern shore of the Danube. In the Dobrudja Rumania had the new railway from Tchernavoda to Dobritch; but she had no lateral line, for the main Tchernavoda–Constanza railway was sixty miles inside the new frontier. Bulgaria, on the other hand, had the Rustchuk–Varna line close at her back for offence and defence. It may fairly be said, therefore, that the natural strategic difficulties of Rumania's geographical situation were increased in every theatre by railway communications vastly inferior to those of her enemies.

The second part of her problem was the military strength at her disposal. She had, roughly, half a million of men; but her armies, while containing abundance of good human material, were, except in the older units, imperfectly trained and very imperfectly armed. For two years she had contemplated war; but since she was dependent for new *matériel* on foreign imports by way of Russia, the supply had naturally fallen far short of the demand. The standard of equipment which she had set herself before declaring war had been too modestly conceived. She was desperately short of heavy guns, of aircraft, of machine guns, even of rifles, and she had no great reserve of ammunition. The Vetterli rifle

had just been served out to her troops—a weapon which Italy had discarded twenty years before. In every branch of equipment she was far below the level of the Teutonic League. Moreover, she was not rich in trained officers or experienced generals. Few, even of her senior commanders, had had actual experience of war, save as boys in the Russo-Turkish campaign forty years before. She was preparing not for a war of positions, where strong natural and artificial defences may give a chance to the weaker side, but for a war of movement, where skilful leadership and sound organization are all in all. She was entering, moreover, upon a campaign against an enemy who fought largely with his guns, and she had only a trifling artillery to meet the gigantic " machine " which had now been elaborated through two years of unceasing effort. Her four armies—each no more than a group of half a dozen infantry divisions ill supported by artillery—had to guard an awkward frontier of over seven hundred miles. She could not expect to succeed unless she had the help of her allies in guidance and leadership, in strategical diversions, and above all in equipment. She counted especially on Russia—on Lechitski's progress in the Carpathians to embarrass the Austrian left wing in Transylvania. She counted, too, on Sarrail's advance in the Balkans to distract the attention of Bulgaria. She reckoned upon a steady flow of munitions across the Russian border. In all these hopes, as we shall see, she was disappointed. She was left to make her decisions, and for the most part to fight her battles, alone.

The blame for the Allies' failure to support Rumania is hard to apportion. Partly it was the fortune of war. Sarrail failed to advance from Salonika, not from lack of good will, but from lack of strength. Lechitski, in the Carpathians, with an army tired by four months' fighting, could not play the part assigned to him. Russia, at the moment of Rumania's entry, was coming to the end of her mighty effort from sheer exhaustion of men and munitions. Her General Staff had tried to induce Rumania to declare war in June, when Brussilov's advance was beginning, but she had deferred the step to so late a date that the impetus of the Galician movement was all but exhausted. The great soldier who was Chief of the Russian Staff now deprecated Rumania's adventure, and in this, as in many other things, Alexeiev was right. When the *débâcle* came, he and his colleagues did their best to step into the breach, but the chance of success had long passed. Yet it must be remembered that it was Petrograd especially which forced King Ferdinand's decision, and on the civil Government of Russia must rest no small

part of the blame for what followed. They had offered Rumania extravagant terms, in the shape of territorial annexations, and Stürmer and his *camarilla* had guaranteed an ample munitionment. This last and most vital promise was never fulfilled—was never attempted to be fulfilled. There were strange tales of consignments of munitions for Rumania side-tracked and delayed by direct orders from Petrograd, and there is some reason to believe that Stürmer had deliberately planned a Rumanian defeat as part of his scheme for a separate peace with Germany. Such treason was confined to the civilians, and was wholly alien to the mind of the Russian soldiers. The latter did what they could, but Fate and Hindenburg were the stronger.

Since, therefore, in the details of the campaign, Rumania followed her own counsels, it remains to consider the wisdom of the strategy she adopted. Assuming that the Allied assistance which she counted on had been forthcoming, was her plan of action the best in the circumstances? During the winter of 1916 she was severely criticized in the West both in military and civil circles, and the criticisms were mainly directed to her initial strategy. What was this strategy, and wherein did it fall short of common sense?

Of her four armies she directed three against Transylvania, with, as their ultimate objective, the central valley of the river Maros. The fourth army was left on the defensive in the Dobrudja, to cover the Bulgarian frontier; and small detachments from it were scattered along the Danube valley to watch the crossing-places. The Austrian Danube flotilla held all the middle river, and the Rumanian river-craft were unable to leave the lower reaches. Rumania's strategic aim may, therefore, be set out as follows: She stood on the defensive against Bulgaria with small forces, hoping that Sarrail in the south would keep the attention of that enemy sufficiently occupied. With her main armies she aimed at cutting off the Transylvanian salient and holding the line of the Maros—partly, for political reasons, to free her Transylvanian kinsmen; partly to give herself a short and straight defensive line instead of the long curve of the mountain barrier; partly to turn the right wing of the Austrian forces opposed to Lechitski, and so, in the event of a Russian advance, to prepare a complete enemy *débâcle* in eastern Hungary. The current criticism upon her action was that she sacrificed strategy to politics; that, preoccupied with the desire to win Translyvania, she entered it prematurely, when she was too weak to hold it; and that she missed a supreme chance

of striking a deadly blow at the enemy by cutting the communications between Germany and Turkey. The proper course, it was argued, was for Rumania to have stood on the defensive in the mountain passes, and thrown her main weight through the Dobrudja against Bulgaria and the Ottoman Railway.

Such reasoning in the light of after events is clear and convincing; but the problem which Rumania had to solve in those last days of August was by no means simple. Undoubtedly the desire to vindicate their decision by the occupation of Transylvania was strong among the members of M. Bratianu's ministry; but there was some justification for Rumania's plan on military grounds alone. Her main enemy lay in the west, and sooner or later the Austro-German armies would move against her. How was she to hold the long curve of the hills and the many passes with slender forces, with a perfect railway system in front of her, and the worst conceivable at her back? Every pass could be turned on its flanks, and the German Alpine troops would find a way over the goat tracks.* For the moment she had a great chance. The enemy was hotly engaged farther north, and there was nothing in Transylvania but a few weak divisions. She had the initiative, and the advantage of surprise; if she could once reach the line of the middle Maros she would have won a strong strategical position, far better for defence than the line of the frontier, and she would have the good Austrian railways for her own use. Considered purely as a defensive measure, it seemed wise to cut off the difficult western salient and win a shorter and easier line. Moreover, such a plan might have also a high offensive value. Rumania at the moment believed with the rest of the world that Brussilov's advance had still far to go. She thought that presently Lechitski would be across the Carpathians. If that happened, the presence of her troops on the enemy's flank might turn a retreat into a wholesale disaster. Alexeiev proposed that Russian troops should be transferred to Transylvania, and that Rumania's line of defence in the west should be in the foothills short of the main ranges. Rumania refused the advice, largely because she feared that Russia's temporary occupation of Transylvania might become permanent. On the other hand, she anticipated no danger from the side of the Dobrudja. Sarrail's offensive had been part of the bargain with the Allies, and, even if it did not advance far on the road to

* The argument is stated as it may have appealed to the Rumanian General Staff. But as a matter of fact, with depleted forces the Rumanian army did succeed in holding Falkenhayn for weeks in the foothills, after he had won the main divide.

Sofia, she believed that it would keep the three Bulgarian armies busily engaged. Further, at first she seems to have even hoped that Bulgaria would refrain from a declaration of war—a political miscalculation in the circumstances not altogether unnatural. In any case, if she had to choose between two dangers, the menace from Transylvania loomed far the greater. To the Western world it seemed as if Rumania at the outset embarked on a rash offensive. It would be truer to say that her generals—whatever may have been the case with her politicians—thought principally of the best defence.

They thought about it too much, and therein lay the secret of her failure. Her plan was not conceived in the general interests of the whole Alliance, but with regard chiefly to her own security. From the Allies' point of view the occupation of Transylvania mattered little; but the cutting of the Ottoman Railway would have struck deep at the roots of German power. Had Rumania played the "long game" she would have risked everything in the west, and struck hard from the Dobrudja at the German highway to the east. It is difficult to believe that she would not have succeeded, and the blow would have altered the whole course of the campaign in Eastern Europe. For her the bold path would also have been the path of safety. "He that saveth his life shall lose it," is a maxim not only of religion but of war.

I.

The breach with Austria found three Rumanian armies waiting to cross the Transylvanian frontier. The First Army, under General Culcer, was the left wing of the invasion, and its front of 120 miles extended from Orsova to east of the Rotherthurm Pass. Obviously half a dozen divisions could not operate continuously on such a front, so the advance fell into three groups—the left against the Orsova–Mehadia railway, the central against Hatszeg by way of the Vulkan Pass, and the right through the Rotherthurm Pass against Hermannstadt. East of the First Army lay the Second Army, under General Averescu, the ablest of Rumanian generals, who had risen from the ranks to be Chief of Staff in the invasion of Bulgaria in 1913. Averescu's force extended as far north as the Oitoz Pass, and was the main army of assault, whose object was the seizure of the central Maros valley, assisted by the flanking forces on the south. North of Averescu lay the Army of the North, the Fourth Army, under General Presan, whose right

wing was in touch with Lechitski's left in the Dorna Watra region. The Third Army guarded the Danube and the Dobrudja frontier.

At the moment the Austrian strength in Transylvania was small —five divisions, under General von Arz von Straussenberg. Nor was their quality high, for they consisted partly of Landwehr and partly of troops which had suffered severely in Brussilov's attack. The Rumanians, strung out on a 400-mile frontier, and advancing through passes separated often by forty miles of rocky mountain, were obviously in a precarious position against a strong enemy. Their hope of success was to break through the feeble resistance speedily, and win their objective before the enemy could gather his supports. If Rumania was to succeed, she must succeed at once, or, with her poor communications and widely scattered units, she would find herself checked on a line where she could not abide.

The Rumanian armies were in motion on the evening of 27th August, and next day were pouring across the passes towards the frontier railway in the upper glens of the Maros and the Aluta. They moved fast, and found little opposition. In the Tomos Pass a regiment drawn from the Magyars of Transylvania offered some resistance, but was driven in with heavy losses. In the Tolgyes a Czech regiment went over bodily to the invader. During that week the bulletins posted up in Bucharest were cheerful reading. On 29th August the town of Kezdi Vasarhely, west of the Oitoz Pass, was occupied, as well as Kronstadt, north of the Predeal, and Petroseny, north of the Vulkan. This gave them most of the upper Aluta valley, and the lands held by the Saxon and Magyar immigrants. On 2nd September, on the extreme right, a column, descending from the Tolgyes Pass, occupied the town of Borsok, and sent out cavalry patrols to get in touch with Lechitski on the Bukovina front. On the 4th the Rumanians, advancing from the Rotherthurm Pass, were close upon the important town of Hermannstadt. On the same day the advance from the right over the Bekas Pass reached the frontier railway. By the 9th, from Toplitza southward the whole frontier valley, between the outer and inner walls of Transylvania, was in Rumanian hands. Next day Hermannstadt was evacuated, and the enemy withdrew to the northern hills. The advance was slowest just north of the Vulkan Pass, where the defence fought hard for the vital junction of Hatszeg, but by 12th September three-fourths of the distance had been covered by the invader. On the extreme left a Rumanian division had carried the Cerna line, and entered Orsova. Within a fortnight from the declaration of war the Saxon and Magyar peoples

of south-eastern Transylvania were in full flight westward; the invasion had penetrated in some places to a depth of fifty miles; all the passes, the strategic frontier railway, and most of the frontier towns had been occupied, and nearly a quarter of the country was in Rumanian possession.

It was a dazzling success; but it was fairy gold which could not endure. The enemy had fallen back upon a shorter and safer line, and the real struggle had not begun. The Rumanians, with their armies and groups far apart and often unable to communicate, were immeshed in a difficult country of divergent valleys, with many strong positions to take before they reached the comparative security of the middle Maros. Moreover, the enemy was preparing a deadly counter-stroke, though the invaders, with hardly an airplane to serve their needs, were ignorant of his preparations. As early as 29th July a plan had been agreed upon, for which Germany undertook to provide five infantry and two cavalry divisions. When Falkenhayn ceased to be Chief of the General Staff, the Emperor had announced that he was destined presently to take up an important command. This command was the new Austro-German IX. Army, even now assembling in the lower Maros valley. It was intended to strike hard at the left of the straggling Rumanian front, and open the passes leading to the Wallachian plain. Another army under Mackensen was being assembled south of the Danube to clear the Dobrudja of the enemy, and be ready, when Falkenhayn had stormed the passes, to cross the river and join hands with him in an enveloping movement upon Bucharest. At first Conrad von Hoetzendorff would have brought Mackensen directly across the Danube against the Rumanian capital, but Falkenhayn insisted that the Dobrudja must first be won, and he was supported by Ludendorff and Hindenburg. It was a bold and subtle scheme, the true type of that offensive which is the best defence, and it was based upon a correct judgment of Rumania's weakness and Russia's preoccupations. Its success was certain from the moment when the main forces of Rumania were poured across the Carpathians rather than over the Dobrudja frontier.

The first move came from Mackensen. He was in the Balkans when Rumania declared war, and during the four days which elapsed before Bulgaria followed suit he had concentrated his mixed forces with unprecedented speed. He could count on three Bulgarian infantry divisions, two Bulgarian cavalry divisions, and the better part of a German corps, while two Turkish divisions were on their

way to reinforce him. Above all, he disposed of a far greater weight of artillery than his opponents. The problem before him had the simplicity of an illustration to a staff lecture on strategy. The new frontier in the Dobrudja was 100 miles long. But the Dobrudja narrows as it runs northward, and it is only thirty miles wide where the main line runs from the bridge of Tchernavoda to Constanza. Every mile he advanced, therefore, made his front shorter. Further, if he could cut off the Rumanian bridgeheads at Turtukai and Silistria, he would get rid of any danger of a flank attack on Bulgaria across the Danube. He would advance with his flanks resting securely on the river and the sea. If he could win the Tchernavoda–Constanza line, he would be master of all the Dobrudja, and would cut off Rumania from any connection with Russia by sea. Finally, the Dobrudja won, he would have a safe starting-point for the passage of the Danube and the flanking movement against Bucharest.

On 1st September Bulgarian troops crossed the Dobrudja border, striking on the eastern flank against the railway which links Dobritch and Baltchik. The Rumanian frontier guards fell back, and on the 4th the enemy had Dobritch, Baltchik, and Kavarna. This gave Mackensen a good strategic front on his right, and he proceeded to wheel his left against Turtukai and Silistria. Each of these places was held by an isolated Rumanian division. Had Rumania possessed an adequate air service the perils of Mackensen's movement would have been discerned, and the divisions withdrawn. But only the German armies had " eyes."

Turtukai was little more than a large village, and owed its importance solely to the ferry across the Danube between it and Oltenitza, which stands on a tongue of hard ground between the marshes of the northern bank and is the starting-point of a road to Bucharest. Since 1913, when it became a frontier post, it had been provided with extensive barracks, and defended by forts and entrenchments. On 2nd September two Bulgarian divisions advanced from the south against the forts, while a Bulgarian-German force, with heavy guns, came down the river from the west by the Rustchuk road. By the morning of the 5th the place was invested, and that evening an attempt by the general commanding at Silistria to send supports was easily frustrated. Next day, the 6th, the garrison of Turtukai was compelled to surrender, and 100 guns and the better part of two infantry divisions fell into Mackensen's hands. It was a serious disaster for Rumania to suffer on the tenth day of her campaign.

The detachment at Silistria, warned by the fate of Turtukai, did not linger. The place was evacuated, and on 9th September was occupied by the Bulgarians. Mackensen's problem was now to bring up his centre to the level of his left wing, and to form a front on the line Silistria–Dobritch–Kavarna. This was presently accomplished, and once more he swung forward his left, till on the 11th he held the front Karakioi–Alexandria–Kara Agach. Here the Rumanian resistance stiffened; but the German general pressed on, till, on the 16th, he was in contact with the main Rumanian position a dozen miles south of the Tchernavoda railway, running from Rashova, on the Danube, to Tuzla, on the Black Sea.

Rumania, engrossed in her Carpathian advance, had perforce to turn her attention to a menace which she had ruled out as unlikely. She saw her gains of 1913 disappearing, and her communications with her main seaport in jeopardy. The measures she took to meet the crisis showed her bewilderment. Three divisions were hurried eastward from the Transylvanian front, and Averescu was recalled from the command of the Second Army to take charge of the Army of the Danube. The Russian general Zayonchovski was placed in command of the whole defence, and the Russian contingent present included a division composed of Southern Slavs taken prisoner by Russia, who had asked to be led against the enemies of their race. The Russo-Rumanian army in the Dobrudja was now concentrated, not so much by any design of its commander as because one of its outlying divisions had been destroyed and two more driven back upon it. The opposing forces were approximately equal in numbers, and the Rumanians were fighting on interior lines with slightly the better communications behind them. This advantage, however, such as it was, was more than neutralized by the fact that Mackensen had many more guns and a far greater munitionment.

For the moment the defence proved the stronger. The rolling barrens of the Dobrudja presented no obstacle to movement so long as the weather was dry, and Mackensen was in a hurry to win his objective before the weather broke. On 16th September he struck with his left, and for four days there was bitter fighting, during which Zayonchovski held his ground. On the 20th the latter received reinforcements and opened a counter-offensive against the enemy's right in the neighbourhood of Toprosari, east of the Dobritch–Megidia railway. By the 23rd Mackensen was forced back at least ten miles behind the line which he had

held on 14th September. It was a fine achievement, and the heroic Southern Slav division played no small part in it. It is clear that Mackensen's initial supply of shells had run short, and that in ordinary infantry fighting his men were not the superiors of the defending force. But he had the means to procure a further stock, and his opponents had none. Had Zayonchovski had reserves to fling in at the critical moment, it is possible that he might have turned the retreat into a rout, pushed the enemy beyond the Dobrudja border, and carried an offensive far into Bulgaria. But his men were weary, and he had no supports. He was compelled to wait on Mackensen's next move, in the painful knowledge that though his enemy had failed as yet to attain his main objective, he had forced Rumania to conform to his strategy, had nullified two avenues of communication for a Dobrudja campaign, and had compelled at a critical moment the weakening of the Transylvanian front.

For in Transylvania the skies were already darkening. The two northern armies, indeed, still continued to progress after the middle of September. Presan's army advanced from the glen of the upper Maros over the Gorgeny mountains, and approached the upper Kokel valley, with its important railway line. The Second Army—now under General Crainiceanu—crossed the Geisterwald, and on the 16th took the historic town of Fogaras on the Aluta. But the First Army, engaged around Hermannstadt and in the Striu valley on the way to Hatszeg, was already feeling the first effects of Falkenhayn's new concentration.

It was commonly supposed in the West that the Teutonic League, being *accroché* on the Somme and in Galicia, would have no surplus troops for a Rumanian expedition. What Hindenburg did was precisely what he had already begun to do in the West. He took infantry regiments from four-regiment divisions, and battalions from four-battalion regiments. His main trust, now as ever, was in artillery, and on all the fronts, while he kept the guns up to strength, he provided a smaller complement of men. For Rumania he relied mainly on his guns, the service in which his opponents were weakest; but he also provided Falkenhayn with some admirable infantry units. The northern sector, facing the Rumanian Fourth Army, was taken over by the right wing of the Austrian VII. Army, and the Rumanian First and Second Armies were faced by the Austrian I. Army, under von Arz, and Falkenhayn's new IX. Army. The latter had with it the Alpine

Corps, which had hitherto been with the Imperial Crown Prince at Verdun—men drawn from the Bavarian Highlands, and familiar with every branch of mountain fighting.

General Coanda, commanding that part of the First Rumanian Army which was operating west of the Vulkan Pass, was getting dangerously near to Hatszeg and the main line from the Austrian bases ; so on him fell the first brunt of the German counter-attack. He was now astride the Striu valley, and on 15th September he encountered a German force under the Bavarian general, von Staabs. Coanda, after a gallant fight, made a skilful retirement. The Hatszeg range of mountains lay between him and the frontier, and the railway by which he retreated circled round the eastern end of the range, and then turned south to the Vulkan Pass. Pivoting upon his left, he resisted the effort of von Staabs to outflank him in the Hatszeg mountains, and swung his front round parallel to the frontier. On the 20th he evacuated Petroseny, and by the 22nd his right was back at the Vulkan Pass. That night he counter-attacked, and took many prisoners, while his left threatened to cut the German railway communications. Staabs was forced back to a position astride the Striu valley at Merisor, and his gains of the week were lost. Coanda maintained his ground till the disastrous events farther east compelled him to fall back through the Vulkan into Wallachia.

Falkenhayn's main thrust was delivered against the section of the First Army known as the "Aluta Group," which at the moment held a line from Porumbacu in the Aluta valley, by the heights north of Hermannstadt, to Orlat in the tributary valley of the Sibiu. This, the right of the First Army, was separated by a space of some fifteen miles from the left of the Second Army near Fogaras. Ten miles of rough mountain lay between it and the frontier range ; it had no supports in flank, and it had no rearguard to speak of at the Rotherthurm Pass. The position was fated to be turned, and Falkenhayn grasped the opportunity. He disposed his forces in three columns. The western, consisting of the Bavarian Alpine Corps, was directed to cross the intervening hills, and cut the line of retreat through the Rotherthurm Pass ; the eastern to march through the gap between the First and Second Armies ; and the central to attack in front the line Orlat–Porumbacu.

The Bavarian Jägers, under General Krafft von Delmensingen, started on the 22nd, and, crossing ridges 5,000 feet high, reached the southern base of Mount Cindrelul on the night of the 23rd. After that their path became more difficult, and they had several

encounters with Rumanian pickets; but by the 26th they were close to the Rotherthurm Pass. That day they attacked the pass, won both its ends and the adjoining peaks, and cut the railway line from Hermannstadt to Wallachia. They took large quantities of material on its way to the Rumanian forces, and on a rock at the Rumanian end of the pass clamped great letters of iron commemorating their success. It was an operation which for its speed and secrecy well deserved the grandiose memorial.

Had the rest of Falkenhayn's scheme proceeded with the precision of the part entrusted to the Bavarians, the Aluta group must have suffered complete destruction. His left succeeded in cutting any communication with the Second Army by forcing the passage of the Aluta east of Porumbacu, but it failed to execute a true flanking movement. On the 26th, the day the Rotherthurm Pass fell, the main German force opened a furious bombardment on the Rumanian front at Hermannstadt. The Rumanians were now aware of their imminent danger, and they met the crisis in the spirit of soldiers. Since the Rotherthurm Pass was closed to them, they must retreat south-eastward and cross the frontier range by goat paths and difficult saddles. To cover such a retreat, the rearguards offered a stout resistance, and every village was the scene of bitter fighting. Next day their main force was at Talmesh, and during the following week they fought their way back over the border crest. The Second Army did what it could by an advance west to Porumbacu, and a contingent from Wallachia kept the Bavarians busy in the Rotherthurm Pass. The retiring troops lost heavily, but the amazing thing is that their losses were not greater. The Germans claimed no more than 3,000 prisoners and thirteen guns, and the main booty was laden wagons and rolling-stock intercepted on the Hermannstadt railway. It was faulty generalship which led to the surprise of 26th September, but both leaders and men showed at their best in their efforts to retrieve the disaster. Hermannstadt was an undeniable defeat, but it was never a rout, and the retreat over the range will rank as one of the most honourable achievements in the story of Rumanian arms.

But Falkenhayn had won his end. He was now free to turn eastward against the flank of the Second Army. Crainiceanu was pushing towards Schassburg in spite of the misfortunes of his western neighbours, and the Fourth Army was moving down the valley of the Great Kokel towards the same objective. These operations were admirably conducted, and had they taken place at the beginning of September instead of at its close, the line of the

central Maros might have been won. On 3rd October the position occupied was astride the valleys of the two Kokels, and within a dozen miles of both Schassburg and Maros Vasarhely. It was the high-water mark of Rumanian success in Transylvania, for on 4th October Falkenhayn's sweep to the east had begun, and Fogaras was evacuated. The pressure proved irresistible, and the Second and Fourth Armies began to fall back on divergent lines to the frontier, the former towards the Torzburg and Buzeu Passes, the latter towards the Gyimes and the Oitoz.

On 6th October the Bucharest official reports for the first time abandoned their tone of confidence, and announced that "in the south of Transylvania the Rumanian army is retiring before superior forces." The retirement was about to become universal. The tide had turned, the invasion had ended in failure, and everywhere, except in the extreme north, Rumania was being forced back to defend her frontier passes. South of the Rotherthurm, indeed, the campaign was already being fought on Rumanian soil.

II.

The closing stages of Brussilov's attack in the north had so vital an influence on the Rumanian campaign, that they may be most logically grouped with it. Stanislau fell on 10th August, and by the 15th Bothmer's army had drawn back towards the Zlota Lipa. The first two phases of Brussilov's advance had been crowned by a brilliant success. The Russian offensive had, indeed, attained its main object, since two Austrian armies had been shattered, over 350,000 prisoners taken, and little short of a million men put out of action. There remained six weeks of good campaigning weather in which to complete the work begun on the 4th of June by the taking of some enemy key-point like Kovel or Lemberg. The past two months seemed to warrant such hopes, and the entry of Rumania into the war promised a grave distraction for Hindenburg on his southern flank.

But Germany had not been slow to perceive and prepare against the danger. The whole of the Eastern commands had been transformed. The Archduke Charles took formal charge of the forces against Rumania and his former group passed to Boehm-Ermolli, the supreme direction of all troops north of the Carpathians being vested in German Headquarters. The *de facto* German control, which had existed since the first day of war, was now officially proclaimed and extended to the smallest details.

The Austrian regiments were moved about like pawns on a chess-board, without regard to the wishes of their nominal commanders. They did not complain, for the Prussian handling was efficient, and that of their own leaders had been chaotic. Now, at any rate, they were decently fed, and their transport well organized; but they perceived that they were regarded by their new masters as mere "cannon fodder," and their love did not increase for their allies. "We are beasts to be sent to slaughter," wrote one Austrian officer. "When it is necessary to attack we go in front. When enough of us are killed, the Germans advance under cover of our dead." But till the moment of need arrived the cannon fodder was well cared for. The Magyar regiments were for the most part brought southward to the Transylvanian front, where they would be defending Hungarian territory from invasion. Everywhere along the depleted Austrian line German troops were introduced, and the German commanders, even when they had only divisional rank, became the true directors of operations. For the most part Austrians were left in charge of the corps, and from the Pripet marshes southward all the army commanders, with the exception of Bothmer, were Austrians. But both corps and army had ceased to be important units. The true field units were now the divisions, and we find, as on the Western front, that groups of divisions tended to replace the old corps, and groups of armies the old armies. Almost every group commander was a German, and it was with Linsingen, Bothmer, and Falkenhayn that there lay the direction of the Eastern campaigns.

Brussilov's main objective in August was twofold—to push towards Lemberg, and to fling his left wing beyond the Carpathians so as to keep touch with the right of the now imminent Rumanian advance. This dual aim meant a dislocation of his offensive front, for there could be no strategic relation between the Carpathian campaign and that north of the Dniester. Accordingly we find Lechitski's Ninth Army definitely assigned to the Carpathian area, and given a south-west alignment, while Tcherbachev extended his left across the river, and took over the whole Dniester front. The battle-ground for Russia had become two self-contained terrains, where the forces in one could render no assistance to those in the other. Had Lechitski's aim been merely to form a defensive flank it would have been different, but he had a heavy offensive duty laid upon him. It is in this inevitable divergence of purpose that we must look for the cause of the check which Brussilov's advance was presently to suffer. Russia was approaching the limits of her

accumulation of reserves and munitions, and could not sustain at the old pitch two campaigns conducted in two wholly distinct areas. If Brussilov had been able to concentrate his main energies on the movement towards Lemberg he might well have succeeded; if he had remained idle on the Zlota Lipa and put all his force into the Carpathian attack he might have turned the enemy flank in Transylvania, and frustrated Falkenhayn's march on Bucharest. But in the middle of August the situation was still too obscure to allow Alexeiev to forecast the true centre of gravity, and Tcherbachev was committed to the advance on Halicz before the importance of the Carpathian flank had revealed itself.

We left the army of Bothmer with the main feeders of its right wing cut by Lechitski, and with Tcherbachev across the Zlota Lipa north of Nizniov, and so threatening to turn its flank. Brussilov's new position north of the Dniester was now well established. His right wing on the Stokhod and his hold on Brody safeguarded his flanks in Volhynia, while in the south he had the Dniester itself to cover his swing towards Lemberg. He had three railways along which to advance—that from Tarnopol by Zborov and Krasne, that by Brzezany, and that by Halicz—all three converging on the Galician capital. It was his aim to strike at Halicz and Brzezany, while at the same time the army of Sakharov pushed south-westward from Volhynia against the northern side of Bothmer's salient. The immediate key-point was Halicz, the importance of which was due to a number of quite different reasons. The town stood on the right bank of the Dniester, commanding the chief road-bridge in that neighbourhood. The Stanislau–Lemberg railway crossed the river at Jezupol, a few miles farther down. If Halicz fell, then the southernmost of the lines running east from Lemberg was lost for the purpose of Bothmer's retirement, and, moreover, the valuable lateral line up the valley of the Narajovka would be rendered useless. Again, the westernmost of the river ravines running south to the Dniester was that of the Gnila Lipa. The loss of Halicz meant that this, the last strong defensive position before Lemberg was reached, would be turned on its right flank. Finally, Halicz was an important depot where large stores had been accumulated, stores which could not be easily moved in the disorganization of a general retreat. If Lemberg was to be saved it was clear that Halicz must stand.

Under Tcherbachev's pressure Bothmer fell back from the Strypa towards the Zlota Lipa, twenty miles to the west. His

position was curious, for while his centre and left were on a straight line, his right was bent sharply back, since the Russians, assisted by Lechitski's advance south of the river, had crossed the Kuropiets by 8th August, and were over the Zlota Lipa close to its junction with the Dniester by 11th August. On the 13th they had taken Miriampol, some ten miles from Halicz itself. Elsewhere Bothmer's retirement was more leisurely. The Russian right was at Tseniov on the 13th, and the centre not far from Zavalov. They had marched fast so long as their route lay over the treeless plateau just west of the Strypa, but the country became more formidable as they approached the broken hills and the forests around the Zlota Lipa. Moreover, Bothmer had fallen back upon a prepared position, and had received large reinforcements for its defence.

By 20th August, when his retreat had definitely halted, Bothmer's fifty-mile front lay from south of Zborov, in the north, to the Dniester, east of Halicz. On his left across the Tarnopol–Krasne railway lay the right wing of Boehm-Ermolli's Austrian II. Army. Bothmer lay from Koniuchy along the river Tseniovka to the Zlota Lipa, at the important junction of Potutory—a line of marshy valley supported by the hills, half crag, half forest, which protected Brzezany on the east. Thence he continued down the broad, swampy vale of the Zlota Lipa to Zavalov, where his position was on the hills on the eastern bank, with Tcherbachev in close contact. South of Zavalov, the German-Austrian wing bent back at a sharp angle to form a defensive flank with the Dniester, for south of that the Zlota Lipa line had gone. The front in this area roughly followed the wooded hills south of the Zavalov–Halicz highway, and reached the Dniester a little west of Miriampol.

Tcherbachev's great effort began on Tuesday, 29th August. He struck first against Bothmer's right centre at Zavalov, and by the evening had pushed it off the hills east of the Zlota Lipa, and forced it across the river. Next day the Russian left came into action towards the Dniester, and for four days the battle raged on a fifteen-mile front from Nosov to Miriampol. On Sunday, 3rd September, the enemy's resistance broke. Jezupol with its railway bridge fell to the Russian extreme left, and there was desperate fighting among the wooded hills south of the Halicz–Zavalov high-road. Late in the day Bothmer's defensive flank was pierced, with the result that the whole of his right and right centre had to retreat in some confusion. The Russian cavalry were sent in, and over 4,000 prisoners were taken. Next day, 4th September,

the Russian centre forced the passage of the Zlota Lipa, routing a Turkish division at Bozhykov, while in the south the railway between Jezupol and Halicz was taken, and the banks of the Gnila Lipa reached. Bothmer had now a singular line. He still possessed the town of Halicz, but not the station on the north bank of the Dniester. Thence his front followed the valley of the Narajovka to Lipnitsa Dolna, and then struck almost due east across wooded hills to the Zlota Lipa. North of that it followed the valley of the Tseniovka to Zborov and Pluhov. The Russian drive towards Halicz had thus made of Brzezany a fairly pronounced salient, a sub-salient, so to speak, or under feature of the greater salient formed by Sakharov's possession of Brody and Tcherbachev's position outside Halicz.

The situation was critical, and reinforcements were hurried up to Bothmer's front. He got back what was left of the 3rd Guard Division and two other German divisions from the Somme, while his Austrian troops were also added to, so that presently his army was stronger than it had ever been since its creation—seven German divisions and fragments of two others, three and a half Austrian, and two Turkish. Moreover, these divisions had mostly been brought up to strength, so that the fifty miles of front were held with not less than a quarter of a million men—a density familiar in the West, but novel in the looser fighting of the Eastern battle-ground.

Meantime Tcherbachev's right had begun its struggle for Brzezany. On Friday, 1st September, he attacked on the east bank of the Tseniovka, some half-dozen miles from Brzezany, and the battle extended south past the junction of Potutory. Between the Tseniovka and the Zlota Lipa stood a ridge called Lysonia, which dominated Brzezany. On 2nd September the Russian guns bombarded the enemy position on this height, and played havoc with the crumbling outcrops of rock which lined the crest like a South African *kranz*. Next day the infantry attacked across the Tseniovka, and carried the ridges which the artillery had rendered untenable. For a moment it looked as if Brzezany must fall. But the place was too vital for the Germans to relinquish it, and a counter-attack by fresh Bavarian troops early on the morning of 4th September won back most of the Lysonia crest. The Russians remained west of the Tseniovka, but they no longer held the high ground In the four days' fighting they had taken nearly 3,000 prisoners. Then during the rest of September the battle stagnated, though Potutory fell into Russian hands. It was a

clear stalemate; both sides were so evenly matched that progress was permitted to neither.

On 5th September Tcherbachev made a bold bid for Halicz. He strengthened his hold on the east bank of the Gnila Lipa and the adjacent northern shore of the Dniester. Bothmer's right wing fell back, blowing up the Halicz bridge, and the town itself was cleared of military stores, and the civil population evacuated. But no progress was possible in this direction until the German centre on the Narajovka was broken. On 7th September Tcherbachev had crossed the Narajovka south of Lipnitsa Dolna, winning a height on the west bank. His position there now formed a sharp salient, which it was the endeavour of the Russians to enlarge and the Germans to destroy. All through September and well into October the struggle continued on the line of this little river, and the Russian attack, though gallantly sustained, was unable to make any real progress. The third stage of Brussilov's offensive perished in the early days of October from sheer inanition. It had no longer the weight of artillery and trained reserves to succeed.

The failure of the Podolian campaign made fruitless Sakharov's supplementary thrust from Volhynia. It was directed southwestward from the Sviniukhy–Bludov line on a front of some six miles in a district of forests and marshy valleys. Ground was gained in the first fight on 1st September, and in the second main action of 20th September. But Tcherbachev's check made its success difficult, and deprived of strategic value even such advance as was made. October saw the Volhynian terrain reduced to the stagnation of the Halicz front.

There remains the final section of this third phase of Brussilov's offensive—the Carpathians, where Lechitski faced the Austrian III. and VII. Armies. The entry of Rumania gave this area a very real importance, but Russia, deeply involved farther north, was unable, as we have seen, to increase her forces there to the strength which the strategic position demanded. On 15th August the crest of the Jablonitza Pass was won, and by the 17th the Russians were holding part of Mount Kapul and the Kirilibaba Pass, at the southern apex of the Bukovina. The accession of Rumania on 27th August gave Lechitski a new orientation, and henceforward his main efforts were directed against the passes of the eastern Carpathians in order to co-operate with his allies. His front extended for nearly one hundred miles from north of the Jablonitza

to Dorna Watra. At first this mountain warfare went well. Between 30th August and 6th September Lechitski reported the capture of 15 officers, 1,889 other ranks, 2 mountain guns, and 26 machine guns. On Monday, 11th September, his left in the Dorna Watra region got into touch with the Rumanian right. On that day, too, Mount Kapul was carried in its entirety, a peak 5,000 feet high above the Kirlibaba Pass, and nearly a thousand prisoners were taken. During these days the Rumanians were pouring into Transylvania, and about the 22nd had reached the farthest limit of their advance. Lechitski formed their defensive flank; but he could do little more, for about the middle of September the snow began to fall and crippled his movements among the high peaks, and he had never that superiority in men and guns which would have allowed him to win the western debouchments of the passes and drive down on the left rear of the Austrian defence in Transylvania.

When the tide of Rumanian invasion turned, and Falkenhayn began his sweep across the Carpathians, Russia's position in the theatre of her summer triumphs, while safe against attacks, did not promise any further success in the near future. Tcherbachev was held at Halicz, on the Narajovka, and opposite Brzezany, and the offensive in Volhynia had come to nothing. Lechitski had captured various outlying parts of the mountain barrier between Hungary and the Bukovina, but he had not broken the defence. Germany's immense effort had for the moment closed the gaps in that Austrian front which in July had seemed to be crumbling. To stabilize their line certain changes were made in the Russian dispositions. A new "Special Army," consisting mainly of the Guard Corps, was formed under Gourko, and placed on Brussilov's right wing, and the Eighth Army was moved southward between the Seventh and the Ninth.

Russia entered upon the winter with very different prospects from those which had faced her a year before. Then she lay weary at the end of her great retreat; now she had behind her a summer of successes which, if they had cost her a million men, had yet inflicted irreparable losses upon her enemies, and had proved conclusively that, given anything like a fair munitionment, she could break the front of the invader. The grandiose schemes proclaimed a year before of the capture of Petrograd and Kiev and Odessa had faded out of the air. She was secure on her front, and seemed to need only a period of recuperation, during which she could complete the training of her reserves and accumulate supplies of

shells, in order to resume her deadly offensive. As before, her problems centred in munitions. There was still no easy way of access for these from her Western Allies. Archangel was still the neck of the bottle, though the new Murman line from the ice-free port of Alexandrovsk was in sight of completion, and she had enormously increased her domestic production. But her moral gains were conspicuous, and her troops had won confidence in themselves and their commanders. Their resolution on the defensive was now supplemented by that assurance of prowess in attack which is necessary to produce the true fighting edge.

There were, indeed, two dark spots in her outlook. The success of the summer had weakened that political unanimity which had characterized the dark days of the Retreat. Reactionary elements appeared in the ministerial appointments, and the Duma and the Government drew apart. The omens in Russian internal politics in the autumn of 1916 were not propitious for a harmonious winter. In the second place, it was clear that Germany would struggle desperately to put Rumania out of action, and to make her share the fate of Serbia and Belgium. Succour could come only from Russia, for the Allies at Salonika were too weak and too far away to affect the situation. In that event Alexeiev might find himself involved in a defensive campaign in Wallachia and Moldavia—a campaign which lay outside his plans—and would spend in a barren terrain the strength which he wished to reserve for the spring advance. Germany might follow on the Eastern front the policy which in the spring of 1916 she had followed in the West, and the line of the Rumanian Sereth might play the part of Verdun.

III.

The check to Brussilov's advance, more especially the unsuccess of his left wing, was soon to be followed by disastrous consequences to the Rumanian offensive. If Bothmer and Kirchbach could hold their opponents among the Dniester cañons and the Carpathian defiles, the way was clear for Falkenhayn to force the weak armies of the invader back over the mountains, and to use the awkward strategic position of the country for a crushing counter-attack. We have seen that the situation on 3rd October might be regarded as the high-water mark of Rumania's success. Thereafter the decline began, like the thaw of a snowfield in spring —a slow shrinkage and declension, which grew quicker as it neared the day of cataclysm.

At first Falkenhayn's counter-thrust was well parried. As the enemy pushed against the left flank of the Second Army, Crainiceanu fell back from Fogaras on 4th October, his line of retreat being towards Kronstadt and the Torzburg, Predeal, and Buzeu Passes. The Fourth Army must inevitably lose connection with the Second, for its route of retirement was the eastern passes leading into Moldavia. On the night of 5th October the Geisterwald was lost, and the left wing of Crainiceanu's army was forced back to the frontier mountains. On the 7th the enemy was in Kronstadt, though the place was not finally evacuated without some stubborn street fighting by the Rumanian rearguards. Three days later the Rumanian Second Army was everywhere back at the Transylvanian gates of the passes. Presan's Fourth Army, though much less hardly pressed, was compelled to conform, and on the same day stood close to the frontier on the upper streams of the Maros and the Aluta.

The great adventure was over, and Rumania was now forced to a hopeless defence. She had taken over 15,000 prisoners during her six weeks' attack, but beyond that had gained nothing; while the strength of her half-trained soldiery had been gravely tried by the Transylvanian raid. Bad as her intelligence system was, she had by this time some inkling of the strength and of the intentions of the enemy, and she braced herself resolutely to meet them. Averescu was recalled from the Dobrudja, and placed again at the head of the Second Army, which had imposed upon it the most critical part of the frontier defence. General Culcer, commanding the First Army, was replaced by General Dragalina, who had distinguished himself in the Orsova section. Moreover, General Berthelot had arrived in charge of a French Military Mission to supply the Rumanian General Staff with advice based on a long understanding of German methods in war.

There could be no hesitation in Falkenhayn's mind about the exact nature of the task before him. He had to drive his enemies back to their borders, and regain control of the frontier railways. That done, he would be on the inside of a curve of 300 miles with a dozen passes to choose from, and able to strengthen rapidly his troops at every point; while his opponents, with slender forces and no good communications for a sudden concentration, would have to watch all the inlets and string their armies along the outer line of the Transylvanian salient. Moreover, there was Mackensen in the Dobrudja, held tight for the moment, but likely, as the stress in the west increased, to free himself from his difficulties,

and win a line which he could hold lightly, thereby releasing his main troops to cross the Danube and take Rumania in flank. Once Rumania had failed to occupy the central Maros valley, and Falkenhayn's IX. Army had taken the field, it was obvious that the Austro-Germans had all the cards in their hands. The only drawback lay in the weather. Snow had begun to fall in the Carpathians before the end of September, and it was possible that winter in the mountains might interfere with the transit of the great guns and their full munitionment. What was to be done must be done quickly.

To win a complete victory at the earliest possible moment it was necessary to force the passes in the centre of the arc of frontier —the passes, that is to say, between the Torzburg and the Buzeu. If that had been achieved and the railway junctions of Ploeshti and Buzeu seized, Rumania would have been split in two, Wallachia would have been separated from Moldavia, and the Rumanian First Army and a large part of the Second would have been cut off. It would have given Falkenhayn the great oil region before it could be destroyed, and the Wallachian harvest before there was time to remove it. He therefore began by driving hard against the passes south of Kronstadt, while Mackensen supported him by an advance in the Dobrudja. The Rumanian Staff were alive to the danger. They successfully held the eastern outlets of the central passes, and when the line gave way it was farther west, where the consequences, serious as they were, proved less disastrous than those which would have followed upon an early debouchment from the Torzburg and Predeal Passes. But gallant as the defence showed itself, it was doomed from the start. It might avert the worst results, but it could do no more than play for time. For a strong concentration, if it held the central passes, involved the weakening of, or at any rate the inability to reinforce, the defence in north-western Wallachia. The gates into Rumania were opened when, towards the close of September, her troops came to a standstill far beyond her borders before they had reached the only objective that spelled security.

We have seen that south of Kronstadt three chief passes, the Torzburg, Predeal, and Buzeu, and two lesser ones, the Altschanz and Bratocea, open into the Wallachian foothills. These passes are narrow defiles, and on the Wallachian side it is many miles before the glens of the rivers, bounded by steep, pine-clad hills, open out into the plains. For obvious reasons it was necessary for the Rumanians to fight as near as possible to their railheads,

so they did not attempt to stand on the main divide, but had their principal defensive positions nearer the southern debouchments. With the loss of many prisoners and a few guns, by the middle of October they had been forced back through most of the passes. The first blow was delivered at the Torzburg. By 14th October the defence was on the main road from Kronstadt to Kampolung, six miles inside the frontier. Here the enemy, failing to force the road by a frontal attack, devoted himself to outflanking movements by the subsidiary valley of the Dambovitsa on the east, and Lireshti on the west. He made no progress, and the Rumanians stood firm in front of Kampolung, on the line Lireshti–Dragoslavele. Farther east, the railway pass of the Predeal was the scene of severe fighting. The frontier ridge was won by Falkenhayn as early as 14th October, and the border town of Predeal was destroyed by shell fire. It fell on 25th October, and, fighting for every mile, the Rumanians fell back through the wooded glens towards the summer resort of Sinaia. In this section the defence was especially brilliant, and by the first days of November the enemy, though he had carried the main range and some of the lateral foothills, had not advanced more than four miles inside the frontier. Meantime Presan and the Fourth Army were holding with equal resolution the gates of Moldavia. He had been compelled to divide his forces into two detachments, one watching the Bekas and Tolgyes Passes and the routes to the upper Bistritza valley, and the other holding the railway pass of Gyimes and the subsidiary Uz and Oitoz Passes, which give access to Okna. The first assaults failed to carry the last-named passes, but by 17th October the enemy was through the Gyimes and some seven miles inside the frontier down the Trotus valley. There he was held and driven back, and by the first days of November had made no headway in this section. Farther north Presan's right wing was no less successful. It held the frontier between the Tolgyes and the Bekas, till it was relieved in early November by an extension southward of Lechitski's left. From that date the Rumanian front was bounded by the Gyimes Pass, and the defence of north-west Moldavia was handed over to that stubborn Russian corps which had been the spearhead of Lechitski in the summer campaign in the Bukovina. Its counter-attack drove the enemy back across the Tolgyes, and in this section regained the initiative.

Meantime a serious situation had begun to develop in the Dobrudja. We have seen that by 24th September Mackensen's advance had been checked, and he had been driven south some

fifteen miles from the line Rashova–Tuzla. There for nearly a month little happened. At one or two points the Rumanians pushed the enemy farther back and took prisoners, and there was an attempt by each side to cross the Danube. The German effort was made on 30th September at Corabia, a port and railhead on the Rumanian bank of the Danube, some miles west of the point where the Aluta enters the main stream. The port was bombarded and a few small craft sunk, but the landing came to nothing. The Rumanian attempt next day was more ambitious. It took place at Rahovo, a little east of Rustchuk, where there is an island on the north side of the river. Some fifteen battalions crossed—too large a force for a mere reconnaissance—and occupied several villages and a tract of land some ten miles wide and four deep. The attacking force was weak in artillery, and, being assailed on both flanks, it was driven back across the river with considerable loss. By the middle of October the pressure on the western frontier precluded all hopes of a Russo-Rumanian offensive in the Dobrudja.

But Mackensen had not been idle. He had received large reinforcements of guns and munitions, and had got two new divisions from Turkey and one from Germany. On 19th October, after a heavy preliminary bombardment, he resumed the offensive, especially against the Rumanian left. Tuzla fell next day, and on the 21st the central position of Toprosari was evacuated, while Mackensen's right pushed within six miles of Constanza. On the railway the Rumanian right-centre was driven back from Copadinu, and before night fell the Tchernavoda–Constanza railway had been cut some twenty miles from the coast. Constanza, bombarded on flank and front, could not be held. On the 22nd its evacuation began, and its stores of oil and wheat were burned. Under cover of the fire of a Russian flotilla in the Black Sea the Rumanian troops withdrew, and in a wild rainstorm Bulgarian cavalry entered the place on the 23rd. They found little booty except some hundreds of empty railway trucks and a few locomotives. But Rumania had lost her principal seaport, and one of her main lines of communication with her Russian ally. Sakharov, formerly in command of the Russian Eleventh Army, had arrived to take charge of the defence, but the Russian divisions were poor in discipline and fighting quality. In a stern order to his troops he warned them that " they had been sent to conquer, or at any rate to fight, and not to see who could run the fastest."

Events now moved swiftly, for against the fire of Mackensen's

guns Sakharov's ill-supplied army could make no stand. On the 23rd Megidia fell, the station on the line half-way between Tchernavoda and Constanza, while the Rumanian right was driven back from Rashova. The great bridge was doomed. Constructed twenty years before by a French company, it was more than 1,000 yards long, built of steel on stone piers, and carried at a height of one hundred feet above the river. The Rumanian bank was low-lying, a wide stretch of swamp and lagoon, and over the bad ground the railway was carried by ten miles of causeway and viaduct. The importance of the spot was not as a crossing-place, for such a crossing could be opposed by a small force on the hard ground about Feteshti, on the northern shore, beyond the marsh belt, and the invaders would have to advance by a long, open defile exposed for miles to gunfire. Mackensen had several better crossings higher up the river, and his attack on the bridge was only the last step in taking possession of the Constanza railway. Once he had secured it and driven Sakharov northwards into bad country with no railway communications, he could afford to entrench himself on the ground he had won, and prepare to invade Rumania across the Danube, so soon as Falkenhayn was through the mountains.

On the 25th the small Rumanian force which held the bridge retired across it, and blew up one of the spans. On that day the Bulgarians entered the town of Tchernavoda. On the 26th Sakharov was twenty-four miles north of the railway, and by the 29th he was on the line Ostrov–Babadag. Here the pursuit was stayed, and presently the counter-offensive began. But the centre of gravity was now in the west, where the Rumanian defence of the hills was beginning to crumble.

We left Falkenhayn held at the debouchments of the central passes. The winter snows had begun, and it looked as if he had missed his stroke. But farther west the Rumanian First Army, holding the Rotherthurm and the Vulkan Passes, was less fortunate than Averescu and the troops of the Second. From the Rotherthurm Pass the Aluta flows for some thirty miles in a narrow gorge, accompanied by a road and a railway—a gorge from its nature impregnable to direct assault. The southern end is the village of Rimnic Valcea, and fifteen miles east of the place is the town of Curtea de Argesh, the terminus of one of the two railways which ran from Piteshti to the hills. If Curtea de Argesh could be won by way of the Aluta and Kampolung by way of the Torzburg, the path would be prepared for the capture of Piteshti, the most

important strategic point in Wallachia. Falkenhayn, therefore, aimed at Piteshti by a converging attack through the Torzburg and the Rotherthurm.

The Bavarian Alpine Corps, as we have seen, secured the southern end of the Rotherthurm on 26th September. During early October that force prepared for the next step, and on 15th October began its advance in three columns. On the east a brigade was to cross the high Moscovul Pass, and descend the glen of the Topologu against Salatrucul. In the centre the Bavarians followed the road which runs along the ridge between the Topologu and the Aluta. On the west a brigade was to take the high ground of Pietroasa and the Veverita mountain towards the tributary glen of the Lotru. From the start all went ill. The eastern force by 18th October had reached the hills directly north of Salatrucul, when the Rumanians closed in on its flanks from the Aluta and Argesh valleys, and but for a heavy snowstorm would have wholly destroyed it. So, too, the western brigade was caught on the Pietroasa *massif*, and flung back with heavy losses. The disasters to the wings compelled Krafft von Delmensingen to hold up the attack of his Bavarian centre.

For a week there was a respite, and then at the close of October the offensive was renewed. On the 28th a fresh German division won positions on the hills between the Aluta and the Topologu. By this time the Aluta group of the Rumanian First Army had been reinforced by some of Presan's troops from the Fourth Army, released by the extension of Lechitski's front; but the enemy was also strengthened, and, since his campaign in the Torzburg and Predeal Passes was checked, and he was about to make his main effort through the Vulkan Pass, it was necessary to pin down the Aluta group to a defence which would preclude it from sending reinforcements westward. By 1st November the Germans had reached the Titeshti valley, which enters that of the Aluta from the east. A week later they had mastered the heights on both sides of the Topologu, and the *massif* of Cozia which commands the mouth of the Lotru glen. By this time events south of the Vulkan had compelled the Rumanians to send thither every man they could spare, and the Aluta group, thus weakened, was forced to fall back. By the middle of November the Germans had won the Aluta valley as far as Calimaneshti and the Topologu valley as far as Suitsi, and controlled the road which linked up the two places. They were only ten miles from the vital railhead of Curtea de Argesh.

We come now to the section where the defence finally broke—

the Vulkan Pass through which ran the road down the Jiu valley to the railhead at Targul Jiu. After beating off the attack in the Striu glen, the Rumanians, about the middle of October, were compelled to give way before the 11th Bavarian Division, and retire through the Vulkan. The enemy advanced in four columns, aiming at an ultimate concentration in the Jiu valley between Targul Jiu and Bumbeshti. General Dragalina, now in command of the Rumanian First Army, had inferior forces and no reserves. He took his stand on the lines which the enemy had marked for his objective, and borrowed a detachment from the division at Orsova and one from the Aluta group. With great tactical skill he made his dispositions, and on 27th October succeeded in checking the enemy attack, and taking many prisoners. Up to 1st November the Rumanians advanced, and drove the enemy back to the mountain ravines by which he had come. This first battle of Targul Jiu was the most conspicuous success of the campaign, achieved as it was by forces inferior both in numbers and artillery. Unluckily it was paid for by the life of the gallant commander. General Dragalina died of his wounds on 9th November, and was succeeded in command of the First Army by General Petale, while the actual fighting on the Jiu was placed under General Vasilescu.

In the beginning of November, though things had gone ill in the Dobrudja, the Rumanian defence in the west had succeeded beyond expectation. The invaders were still held in the foothills, and had nowhere won the debouchments to the plains. Falkenhayn accordingly revised his plans, and resolved to make his supreme effort in the Jiu valley. He knew the smallness of Vasilescu's force, and he knew, too, that there the lateral communications were worst of all, and least permitted the speedy dispatch of reinforcements. Accordingly General Kuhne was put in charge of a strong group, which included four infantry divisions, and a cavalry corps under Count Schmettow. Falkenhayn himself was present in this theatre to watch the fortunes of the new attack. To support it and prevent reinforcements reaching the meagre Rumanian First Army, Krafft von Delmensingen was ordered to press hard on the Aluta, and General von Morgen in the Torzburg and Predeal section.

The heavy guns having been got through the passes, the new offensive began on 10th November with an attack by the two central German divisions against the position on both banks of the Jiu. Ground was won on the heights, and at the same time a German force from the west pressed into the upper Motru glen.

By the 13th the enemy was astride the Jiu valley some six miles north of Targul Jiu, and this place, the terminus of the railway from Crajova, fell on the 15th. The Rumanian position now lay from Copaceni, west of the Jiu, to the river Gilort, down whose valley ran the Crajova line. The situation was desperate, and reinforcements were hurried westward from the Aluta group. They were fated to arrive too late, for on 17th November the second battle of the Jiu was fought, and the whole Rumanian defence crumbled before superior numbers and a far superior weight of guns. Kuhne was advancing on a wide front, flinging Schmettow's cavalry far out on his flanks, and by the 19th he had reached Filiasa, the junction where the line from Targul Jiu joins the main railway from Bucharest to Budapest by way of Orsova. This put the Rumanian division at Orsova, under Colonel Anastasiu, in dire jeopardy.

The retreat of the First Army was now eastward instead of southward. Its first hope was to prevent its left flank being turned, and to fall back on the pivot of the Aluta group, and hold the line of that river. On 21st November German troops entered Crajova, which the Rumanians had evacuated. Kuhne was now well into the Wallachian plains, and his progress became rapid. His next objective was the line of the Aluta, and two days later he was in touch with its defence on the front between Dragashani and Caracalu. The attack on the centre at the railway bridge of Slatina failed, but Schmettow's cavalry managed to cross the river at Caracalu. The position was turned, the railway bridge and the granaries of Slatina were blown up, and by the 27th the Aluta line was abandoned. It was not a moment too soon, for in the north the group of Krafft von Delmensingen was threatening the right flank south of the Rotherthurm Pass, and in the south the left flank was already turned. For on the 23rd Mackensen had begun to cross the Danube.

Sakharov on 9th November had recaptured Hirshova, on the Danube, and pushed back Mackensen in the centre as far as Muslu. On that day, too, a Rumanian attack from Feteshti, on the northern shore of the river, gave them the riverside station of Dunarea, at the north end of the Tchernavoda bridge. Pushing on, by the middle of the month Sakharov was in position from a point on the Danube some seven miles north of Tchernavoda to the shore of the Black Sea fifteen miles north of Constanza. But he never reached the railway, being held by the strong lines which the enemy had constructed for its defence ; and before he could attack them

in force the *débâcle* in the west had put a further offensive in the Dobrudja out of the question.

Early in November Mackensen, having entrusted the task of watching Sakharov to Prince Boris of Bulgaria, turned to his main objective, the crossing of the Danube. In late autumn the river is not a formidable obstacle to an army operating from the south bank. The stream is at its lowest—not more than ten feet deep between Nicopoli and Silistria, and the current is from eight to ten miles an hour. The south bank, as we have seen, is a high bluff with in many places, when the river is low, a beach beneath it; while the northern shore is for the most part swamp and backwater. Holding the high bank, an army with modern guns could sweep the northern shore for three or four miles inland, and command the narrow strips of hard ground between the marshes. In addition to this advantage, Mackensen had at his command a powerful river flotilla of monitors and gunboats, which could lie hidden behind the shrubby islets. So soon as the fall of Orsova and Turnu Severin had opened the way from the upper waters, long trains of barges came downstream, bringing abundant bridging material.

He selected for his first crossing-places Islaz, opposite the Bulgarian railhead of Somovit, and Sistova-Simnitza, the very place where the Russians had crossed in 1877. These points were chosen in order to turn the new Rumanian line of defence on the Aluta. At both places the bridging of the river would be facilitated by the islands in the stream; and since the Sistova crossing in peace times was one of the busiest ferries on the river, there were good landing arrangements on both banks. On 19th November the preliminary German bombardment began to clear the north shore. A thick haze hung over the stream, and under its cover on the night of the 22nd–23rd the enemy river craft swarmed out from the shelter of the creeks and islands. In 1877 the Russians had taken thirty-three days to cross; Mackensen did the main work in eighteen hours. The first troops crossed in steam ferries, and when they had seized the opposite bank pontoon bridges were constructed with amazing speed. There was practically no opposition, for the enemy's overwhelming superiority in guns made it impossible for the Rumanian river guards to make even a show of resistance. By the 26th Mackensen was able to report that he had an army group under General Kosch on the northern bank; that he had cleared the country for twenty miles inland; and that his van was close on Alexandria. Presently at every Danube ferry the

enemy was crossing. Bulgarian cavalry were over the stream at Corabia, and in the east a Bulgarian detachment from Rustchuk sacked Giurgevo.

The end had now fairly come. The Rumanian left flank on the Aluta was turned, and events in the north put the pivot on which they swung in danger. The enemy was still held at the Predeal, but von Morgen entered Kampolung on 29th November. At the same time Krafft von Delmensingen was pressing hard from the Rotherthurm. On the 25th he reached Rimnic Valcea, and on the 27th took Curtea de Argesh. On the 29th Piteshti fell, and the invaders' line ran by way of Dragenesti to Giurgevo —within thirty miles of Bucharest.

Before this sweep the Rumanian groups of the Jiu and the Aluta had fallen back in fair order. But two of the frontier forces were in dire straits. One—the Orsova division—was already beyond hope. Under its gallant leader, Colonel Anastasiu, it had left Orsova on 25th November, and attempted to retreat south-eastward to the Aluta. After three weeks' wild adventures it reached the valley, only to find it held by the enemy. On 7th December, two days after the capital fell, the remnant of the 7,000 surrendered at Caracalu, having extorted from the Germans admiration for their undaunted valour. The Kampolung group, after the fall of Piteshti, was compelled to move south-east over difficult country, and eventually reached Targovishta and the Dambovitsa valley, where it joined the main Rumanian forces.

The situation now was that from the Predeal Pass eastward and northward the mountain position was still held, and the Russians in the Moldavian passes were successfully counter-attacking the enemy. But from the Predeal westward all the passes had gone, the upper Argesh valley was lost, and in the south Mackensen had pushed between the capital and the Danube. Averescu, now in supreme command of the Rumanian forces, attempted one last stand before Bucharest. A Russian division had arrived in support, and north-west lay what was left of the First Army. South and south-west Presan commanded a group formed of troops from what had once been the Third and Fourth Armies to hold the line of the lower Argesh. On 30th November the Germans forced the passage of the little river Nealovu, only sixteen miles from the capital. On 1st December Presan attempted a counter-stroke with the object of driving a wedge between Mackensen and the German centre under Kuhne. He almost succeeded, for he flung the enemy back over the Nealovu, taking thirty guns and 1,000 prisoners.

Unfortunately the expected reserves came too late, and the enemy was reinforced before Presan could press his victory home. The success of 1st December was changed on the 2nd and 3rd to disaster, and Presan's broken forces were driven in upon Bucharest. Meantime farther north the remains of the First Army could not bar the roads down the upper Argesh and the Dambovitsa. The vital junction of Titu fell, and Targovishta, the border-town of the great oilfields, passed into enemy hands.

Since the line of the Argesh and Dambovitsa could not be held, it was clear that Bucharest was doomed. In the days before the war the Rumanian capital ranked as one of the great fortresses of Europe. Around the city the land is a flat plain, open, treeless, and highly fertile, broken only by a slight rise between the Argesh and the Dambovitsa. Such country was considered ideal for a modern fortress, and more than thirty years ago the Rumanian Government accepted the suggestion of Brialmont, the Belgian engineer, to make of the place an entrenched camp like Antwerp. In those days the dreaded enemy was Russia, and Brialmont intended that Bucharest should be the central point for the defence against the Russians advancing towards the Danube, its works being supplemented by an entrenched line on the lower Sereth from Galatz to Focsani. Brialmont's forts, nineteen in number, were arranged in an irregular oval at a distance of from six to nine miles from the centre of the city, connected by a circular railway linked up by three junctions with the existing lines. The forts were of the same type as those of Liége and Namur, a mass of concrete covering a vaulted underground structure, and forming the glacis for armoured steel turrets mounting heavy guns. But in 1914 the first months of war showed that, under the fire of the latest siege artillery, the turret fort, with its steel armour and concrete glacis, was futile. Five millions sterling had been expended on the forts of Bucharest; for this campaign the money was as utterly wasted as if it had been thrown into the Black Sea. It needed 120,000 men to man the defences, and to shut up these numbers in the place would have been to make a present of them to the enemy. The Rumanian Staff had long recognized this truth, and the most they could do was to fight a delaying action on the Argesh to cover the evacuation. That had begun towards the end of November, when Mackensen first crossed the Danube. By 1st December the Ministers, the banks, and the Allied Legations had moved to Jassy, in Moldavia. On 5th December the Arsenal was blown up. On 6th December Mackensen entered the city.

(p. 252.)

Reference.
Austro-German lines of advance
fronts
Land over 3000 feet shown thus
1000
Scale
0 25 50 MILES

Tarnow P. Tilicz P. Dukla P. Mezo Iabbarcz P. Lupkow P. Rostoki P. Vrsok P. Vereczke P. Beskid P. Wyzkow P. Jablonitza P. Marmaros Sziget P. Kirlibaba P. Borgo P. Tolgyes P. Bekas P. Oitoz Pass Tomos Pass Predeal P. Buzeu Pass Tatarhavas Pass Bratocea Pass Rother Thurm Pass Vulkan Pass Gorgeny Mts Transylvanian Alps Carpathians

Bartfeld Stryj Kalicz Stanislau Buczacz Tarnopol Zlota Lipa R. Dniester Zbrucz R. Kamenets Podolsky Chotin Mohilev R. Bug R. Dniester R. Pruth

Ungvar R. Ung Csap Kolomea Sniatyn Czernovitz Mieskolcz Debreczin Grosswardein Csaba Arad Temesvar Broos Hatszeg Petroseny Mehadia Orsova Verchiarava Iron Gate Turnu Severin Pojarevatz Milanovatz Prahovo Negotin Zaichar Parachin Knjashevatz Krushevatz Vidin Calafat Rahova Corabia Islaz Somovit Nicopoli Plevna Simnitza Slatova Turtukai Rustchuk Giurgevo Oltenitza Dragenesti Bucharest Ploeshti Targovishta Piteshti Curtea de Argesh Caineni Racovitsa Rucar Sinaia Kampolung Sumbeshti Targu Jiu Rimnic Valcea Craiova Ceracalu Slatina Filiasa Copaceni Dragashani Caracal Alexandria Turnu Magurele Zimnicea Silistria Rahovo Tutrakan Tecuciu Focsani Fundeni Nomoloasa Galatz Braila Rimnic Sarat Buzeu Marasesti Okna Csik Szereda Szekely Udvarhely Schassburg Maros Vasarhely Kezdi Vasarhely Gyimes Pass Toplitza Bekas P. Dorna Warra Kirlibaba P. Mt Kapul Bukovina Kimpolung Falticeni Sereth Dorohoi Botosani Jassy Korneschti Kishenev Bender Ismail Reni Issaccea Machin Tulcea Ostrov Babadag Hirshova Casapikioi Feteshti Dunarea Stu Tckernavoda Megidia Rashova Constantza Ocargea Copadinu Toprosari Tuzla Alexandria Dobritch Baltchik Kavarna VARNA

Moldavia Wallachia Dobrudja Serbia Hungary Bulgaria Roumania Besarabia

R. Maros R. Temes R. Danube R. Kokel R. Aluta R. Jiu R. Motru R. Olteriz R. Argesh R. Ialomitza R. Prahova R. Buzeu R. Nealoru R. Sereth R. Putna R. Sasaitza R. Trotus R. Bistritza R. Moldava R. Timok R. Ogost R. Nishava R. Isker

THE MAPPA CO LTD LONDON

Meantime, in the north, Falkenhayn was approaching Ploeshti, the centre of the oil region. As he moved east from Targovishta he had before him, like the Israelites in the desert, a pillar of smoke by day and a pillar of fire by night. The air was rank with the fog and fumes of burning oil. The headworks of the wells, the wells themselves, the refineries, the stores, the tanks—all were ablaze as the Rumanians retreated. The destruction was largely the work of a British Member of Parliament, Colonel Norton Griffiths, assisted by the many American engineers employed in the oilworks, and millions of pounds' worth of property was destroyed in a few days. In front of the German armies moved a crowd of fugitives of every class and condition. Roads and railways were congested with traffic. In the towns on the line of the retreat there was little shelter and scanty fare. It was a starved and frozen crowd that struggled into Jassy and Galatz.

The advance of Falkenhayn to Ploeshti had compelled the Rumanians to abandon the defence of the Predeal. Sinaia, the summer residence of King Ferdinand, among the pine-woods of the Prahova valley, was occupied on the same day as the capital. The German line now ran from the Predeal through Sinaia, Ploeshti, and Bucharest to the Danube, where Oltenitza had been abandoned, and a new Bulgarian force was crossing from Turtukai. Wallachia had gone, and the defence was confined to the short front between the apex of the Transylvanian salient at the Buzeu Pass and the river. North of the Buzeu the mountain frontier was still unbroken. The Rumanian army had suffered no Sedan; but it had lost heavily, and the remnant was broken and weary. It was clear that the defence of Moldavia must for the present rest mainly with the Russian reinforcements.

Contemporary history is rarely just to failure. Only when the mists have cleared and the main issues have been decided can the belligerents afford to weigh each section of a campaign in a just scale. Rumania's entry into the war had awakened baseless hopes among her Allies; her unsuccess—her inexplicable unsuccess, as it seemed to many—was followed by equally baseless criticism and complaint. The truth is, that when Brussilov and Sarrail had once failed to achieve their purpose, her chances of victory were gone. She attempted a strategic problem which only a wild freak of fortune could have permitted her to solve. Her numbers from the start were too small, too indifferently trained, and too weakly supplied with guns. Nevertheless, once she stood with her back to the wall,

this little people, inexpert in war, made a stalwart resistance. Let justice be done to the skill and fortitude of the Rumanian retreat. Her generals were quick to grasp the elements of danger, and by their defence of the central passes prevented the swift and utter disaster of which her enemies dreamed. After months of fighting, during which his armies lost heavily, Falkenhayn gained Wallachia and the capital; but the plunder was not a tithe of what he had hoped for. The Rumanian expedition was, let it be remembered, a foraging expedition in part of its purpose, and the provender secured was small. The ten weeks of the retreat were marked by conspicuous instances of Rumanian quality in the field, and the battles of Hermannstadt and the Striu valley, the defence of the Predeal, Torzburg, and Rotherthurm Passes, the first battle of Targul Jiu, and Presan's counter-stroke on the Argesh were achievements of which any army might be proud. And the staunch valour of the Roman legionaries still lived in the heroic band who, under Anastasiu, cut their way from Orsova to the Aluta.

CHAPTER LXV.

THE ITALIAN COUNTER-ATTACK.

June 16–*November* 21, 1916.

Preparations for new Isonzo Battle—Fall of Gorizia—Italy declares War on Germany—The Autumn Campaign in the Carso—Death of the Emperor Francis Joseph.

(*Map*, p. 542.)

THE Austrian threat in the Trentino had, according to General Cadorna, exhausted itself by the 3rd day of June. But this exhaustion did not involve an immediate relinquishment of the struggle for the road to the Venetian plains. The Italian position lay from the Coni Zugna, in the Val Lagarina, to the *massif* of Pasubio, where they held the crests; then south of the Posina to a point south-east of Arsiero; and thence along the southern and eastern rims of the Asiago plateau to the Val Sugana. For a fortnight the enemy fought hard against the Italian centre and right, in the first theatre to break through the Posina heights and reach Schio, and in the second to turn the Italian flank on the Brenta. The splendid defence of Cadorna's left in the Pasubio and Buole region, where the Alpini fought half buried in snow, slept in snow, and had two hundred cases of frost-bite daily, had defeated the dangerous turning movement from the Vallarsa, and the only chances left to the enemy were in the centre and on the east.

The actual Italian counter-offensive may be said to have begun on Friday, 16th June, when, on the extreme right, two columns of Alpini drove two Austrian regiments from Monte Magari, a peak of 5,000 feet above the Val Sugana, which forms the northern buttress of the Sette Communi plateau. Cadorna had begun to reascend the staircase down which the enemy had moved half-way. In spite of a stubborn defence, the Italian right began to close in on Asiago. On the 20th the centre advanced on the heights

south of the Posina, and on Monte Cengio. Meantime Brussilov's pressure in Volhynia was beginning to make itself felt, and by the 25th the Italians had begun to force the pace of withdrawal. Their artillery pounded the enemy positions, and between the Brenta and the Adige they won ground everywhere, in some places only half a mile, in others as much as four miles. On the 25th Monte Cengio was stormed, and Monte Cimone, north of Arsiero, was carried. Next day squadrons of Sicilian horse rode into Asiago, and on the 27th Arsiero was recovered. On the Italian left ground was won north of Coni Zugna, and the whole centre advanced across the Posina. The deep bulge between the Adige and the Brenta was being pressed in, and the enemy fell back only just in time. He had no reserves remaining, for his last division had been flung in to cover the difficult retirement of his left. In two days the Austrians had lost more than half the ground they had gained in their six weeks' offensive.

Presently the enemy's front was behind the Posina and the Assa, and there for the time being he remained. He held a strong position in the centre on the mountain ridges of Maggio, Torano, Campomolon, and Spitz Tonnezza, and even on his flanks he had advanced from his old line, for he held Borgo in the east and Zugna Torta in the west. He had certain definite territorial gains to show for an enormous expenditure of shells, and losses which were not less than 130,000. Moreover, his retreat was skilful, for he lost few prisoners and few heavy guns. As he retired he contracted his front, and so could make up for the absence of the divisions which had gone eastwards against Brussilov. But when all has been said, the Trentino offensive was, from Austria's point of view, a grave failure. It had not reached its main objective—the Venetian plains and the railway communications of the Isonzo front. It had weakened Austria's strength, and lowered her power of resistance to Brussilov's attacks. It had inspired her with the false notion that she had crippled Cadorna and prevented any Italian offensive that year. Finally, it had taught the Italians their business. It had forced them to improve their communications, and to grapple with transport difficulties of the first magnitude. Italy's *matériel* was immensely increased, and her successful resistance not only gave her confidence and enthusiasm, but a certain suppleness in movement and a new technical aptitude. If Cadorna could bring reinforcements swiftly and secretly from the Isonzo to the Trentino, he might carry them back again with the same speed and silence. The penalty for Austria's failure

was not Italy's counter-stroke of June in the Trentino, but her August assault on Gorizia.

As we have seen, the fifty-mile front on the Isonzo was one of the most difficult and complex of all the European battle-grounds. In July the Italian position was as follows: At Tolmino their left flank was east of the river, and established on the hills north of the town, while they held strongly the heights on the western bank. The town remained in Austrian hands, and the area offered no very good opportunities for an advance, since the railway from Gorizia to Villach by the Wochein tunnel was already cut, and a flank march on Gorizia from Tolmino was an almost impracticable undertaking. Fifteen miles south the Italian left centre held the bridgehead of Plava, which offered a possible route for an attack upon Monte Santo, the defence of Gorizia on the north. The enemy, however, held the heights east of the river in great strength, and such a plan, since the asset of surprise was lost, would have involved a cost wholly disproportionate to any conceivable gain. It had been tried on July 2, 1915, and had failed. An attack from this side was not possible till a more sheltered road could be made down into the Plava bottom which would escape the attentions of the enemy from Monte Kuk.

The Italian centre lay in front of Gorizia itself. The city lay in a pocket of plain defended on all sides by ramparts of hills. West of the Isonzo the Austrians held the line of lower heights, Sabotino, Oslavia, and Podgora, on the first and last of which the Italians had formerly effected a lodgment. North ran the Ternovanerwald, with its main positions of Monte Santo, Monte San Gabriele, and Monte Santa Caterina. South lay the northern edge of the Carso plateau. Finally, the Italian right wing lay along the western rim of the Carso itself—that bleak, stony upland, without soil or vegetation, where every acre is a virtual fortress. The map will show that it projects well to the west into the great loop of the Isonzo. The chord of the arc so formed is the dry valley called the Vallone, which runs almost from the plain of Gorizia to the Adriatic. It was that part of the Carso west of the Vallone which formed the key of the southern defences of Gorizia. The valley itself was like a vast lateral communication trench, providing a sheltered road for the movement of troops behind the front line. The Italians held the greater part of this butt-end of the Carso, and in the centre reached almost to the Vallone; but in the north Monte San Michele, and in the south

the line of heights between Sei Busi and Cosich, had defied their efforts. The vital point was San Michele, for it dominated the Gorizian plain.

In any assault upon Gorizia there were two alternatives before the Italian commander. Merely to master the heights on the western bank would not give him the city. He must win them, and also carry in support either the northern defences at Santo or the southern at San Michele. The reason was that with the enemy on San Michele or Santo, the Podgora line, even if won, could not have been used as a position from which to assault the actual river crossing. Cadorna chose the latter of the two alternatives—to carry the western bank, and at the same time take the defence on its southern flank by winning San Michele.

During the winter Italy had made a great effort in the preparation of munitions and heavy guns, and her General Staff had worked out in detail the plans for the Isonzo attack. The Trentino business upset the time-table, but it did not change the essentials of the scheme. Cadorna spent May and June with one eye on the Sette Communi and the other on Gorizia and the Carso, where Boroevitch sat in fancied security. Even in the heat of the last defensive effort in the Trentino there was a steady winning of minor positions in the Gorizian area. For example, on the evening of 14th June a Neapolitan brigade captured by a surprise attack the enemy trenches east of Monfalcone, taking seven machine guns and nearly five hundred prisoners. On the 29th a sudden gas attack almost drove the Italians off the Carso, and in repelling it Colonel Gandolfi was the first soldier to receive the gold medal *al valore* otherwise than as a posthumous honour. Towards the end of June certain movements had already begun for transferring troops and guns from the Trentino to the Isonzo. The Italian Staff divided its operations under this head into three stages. From 29th June to July 27th the work was only preliminary, consisting of the transport of reserve units and of drafts for the existing Isonzo forces, as well as a certain amount of material. From 27th July to the eve of the grand assault the great guns and trench mortars were moved, and the principal new units, who received their orders while on the journey. After the attack began there was a rapid movement of reserves, which the railways, reorganized under the strain of the Trentino defence, handled with conspicuous speed and precision.

Cadorna desired to take the enemy unawares. He intended to feint hard with his right wing against the Monfalcone end of the

Carso position, and so induce the Austrians, under fear of being outflanked, to mass their local reserves there. At the same time, they would assume that it was merely a local effort, and would not hurry such strategic reserves as they might possess to that point from the more distant parts of their line. Then, when the main enemy strength was massed opposite Monfalcone, he intended to strike with his chief forces against Gorizia itself on the front from Sabotino to San Michele. His strategy was assisted by the confidence into which Boroevitch had been lulled. That commander believed that the Trentino offensive had, even in its failure, crippled Italy for months. Once again, as in Volhynia in June, Austria had underrated the recuperative power of her opponents.

From the 1st day of August the Italian artillery bombarded the whole Isonzo front from Sabotino to the Adriatic. The " preparation " was so uniform that the defence could not forecast an infantry attack in any one section from the special violence of the shelling. On Friday, 4th August, came the Monfalcone feint. The Bersaglieri, who had long made this their fighting ground, carried two hills to the east of the Rocca, in their assault upon the strong Austrian flank positions on Monte Cosich. The Austrians left numbers of asphyxiating bombs in their abandoned trenches, which did terrible havoc among the attackers. Presently a counter-stroke drove back the Bersaglieri to their original line. But Cadorna's purpose had been secured, for Boroevitch promptly reinforced the Monfalcone section.

On Sunday, 6th August, the Italian bombardment was resumed, this time with redoubled fury along the front from Sabotino to San Michele. Presently it was reported that the Austrian first position had been destroyed, and at four in the afternoon the infantry crossed their parapets. Against Gorizia itself moved the right wing of the Second Army, the enlarged 6th Corps, under General Capello, whose chief of staff, Badoglio, had planned the details of the battle. On the right against San Michele and the north edge of the Carso was the left wing of the Duke of Aosta's Third Army.

The great battle of that day and the following which determined the fate of Gorizia falls naturally into two parts—the northern, where the Italians aimed at mastering the heights between Sabotino and Podgora ; and the southern, where the objective was San Michele. Sabotino and San Michele may be regarded as the two lateral buttresses of the Gorizian bridgehead, the fall of which must involve its conquest. On the extreme left troops of the

45th Division were directed on Sabotino. The mountain had been tunnelled to within ninety feet of the Austrian trenches, and in that tunnel the first wave of the assault assembled. At the signal they swept up the broken hillside among the blazing scrub with such splendid gallantry that they were through the enemy first position before he had begun his barrage. In twenty minutes the first three trench lines were carried, and within an hour the Italians had the redoubt on the summit, fifteen hundred feet above the river, had captured the whole garrison, and were swarming down the farther side. Before the dark fell the 45th Division held the line San Valentino–San Mauro, within half a mile of the river. Just south of Sabotino a brigade of the 43rd Division assaulted the hill marked 188, and carried it. On their right the Abruzzi Brigade of the 24th Division stormed at dusk the strong line of Oslavia. South, again, a brigade of the 11th Division advanced against Podgora. This key-position, so long contested, was not taken without desperate fighting. The crest was won in patches, and the Italians advanced down the farther slope; but for two days small garrisons of brave men resisted on the summit. An Austrian major with forty men made such a gallant stand that when he was finally overpowered the Italian commander ordered his men to present arms to the prisoners. Austria's fighting record in the campaign was so consistently belittled by her German allies that it is worth while remembering that both against Italy and Russia certain of her troops showed a fighting quality which was never excelled and not often equalled in the German ranks. Finally, to complete the tale of this section, the 12th Division carried Monte Calvaria, and had advanced by nightfall against the enemy's final position between the southern end of Podgora and the river.

Not less were the achievements of the Third Army against San Michele. Had it been possible for the Bersaglieri on the 4th to have carried the Sei Busi–Cosich position, the Italian right might have swung northwards against the southern flank of the mountain. As it was, the place had to be taken by direct assault. The four peaks, three of which had once been in Italian hands, seemed to offer a task too hard for mortal valour. Nevertheless it was completed, but not without heavy loss. The enemy fought from cavern to cavern and from redoubt to redoubt; but he could not be reinforced, and step by step during the 6th and 7th the Italians won their way to the rim overlooking Gorizia and forced the defence northwards.

By midday on Tuesday, 8th August, the whole of the heights

on the western bank of the river had fallen to Cadorna, and the key-point of San Michele on the eastern shore. The moment had now come for the assault upon Gorizia itself. Trench line after trench line had to be carried in the riverside flats, but before the darkness came no Austrians remained on the western bank. The bridges had been damaged, and must be repaired before the army could cross, and for this task it was necessary to get an advance guard over to hold a covering line. At dusk troops of the Casale and Pavia Brigades forded the stream, and entrenched themselves on the farther side, while detachments of cavalry and Bersaglieri cyclists pursued and kept touch with the retreating enemy. That day, too, the right wing won more ground on San Michele, occupying Boschini on its extreme northern edge. By the morning of the 9th the bridges were ready, and the main army crossed the stream. Before noon it entered Gorizia, no longer the pleasant city among orchards which had once made it the Austrian Nice, but a dusty, shell-scarred memorial of a year of war. Meantime the Italian cavalry was pressing eastwards to the line of the little river Vertoibizza, and the hills which on the east bound the Gorizian plain. Already over 12,000 prisoners were in Cadorna's hands, and the casualties of the defence were little less than 80,000.

With the fall of Gorizia Cadorna's offensive entered on its second phase. Trieste was now the direct objective, and as a first step the enemy must be driven beyond the Vallone depression, since as long as he held any part of the western side he menaced Gorizia, and barred progress on the Carso itself. On Thursday, 10th August, began the advance on the Vallone. That day the whole Doberdo plateau was cleared, the Sei Busi–Cosich knot of hills was taken, and the enemy was flung eastward across the valley. At one point in the south, at Debeli, near Monfalcone, the Austrians held their ground for two days longer; but on Saturday, the 12th, their resistance was broken, and the whole of the western butt-end of the Carso was in Cadorna's hands. He pressed on east of the Vallone, took the village of Oppacchiasella, the hill called Nad Logem, and positions on the west side of Monte Pecinka. North-east of Gorizia he won Tivoli, on the slopes of Monte Santa Caterina. But it was clear that the San Gabriele and Santo heights could not be taken without a simultaneous attack from Plava or Monte Kuk. Moreover, it was necessary to rearrange the front after the fortnight's fighting, and about 15th August the advance slowed down. It had made invaluable gains. Gorizia and the Gorizian plain were won, and a vital part of the Carso, the line

now lying several miles east of the Vallone. The Austrians, as in Galicia, had been compelled by their repulse not to shorten but to lengthen a front already inadequately held. The whole southern Isonzo defence system had disappeared, and between Cadorna and Trieste lay a country, difficult indeed, but lacking such elaborately prepared fortifications as those which had made the Isonzo line so stubborn a problem. Between 4th and 15th August he had taken 18,758 prisoners, 393 of them officers, 30 heavy guns, 62 pieces of trench artillery, 92 machine guns, and huge quantities of every kind of war *matériel.*

The August battles roused in Italy a strong emotion of joy and pride. Only those who have seen the steep wooded hills west of Gorizia, and viewed the intractable landscape of the Carso, can realize how great was the Italian achievement. The Carso in especial might be claimed with truth as the most terrible battle-field in Europe. Waterless and dusty, scorching by day and icy by night, it was one giant natural redoubt. There was nothing to soften the shattering percussion of projectiles among the acres of rock and boulders, and wounds which elsewhere might have been slight became deadly injuries. Further, Austria had used all the laborious talent of certain classes of her people to turn the natural strength of the place to the best advantage. In this uncanny fighting Italy was developing special troops distinguished by a desperate ardour and an extreme endurance. She had always been famous for her *corps d'élite,* and to the great names of Alpini and Bersaglieri there were soon to be added those of Arditi and Granatieri. New leaders also had emerged in the struggle, and of Capello and Badoglio the world was to hear much in the future.

The fall of Gorizia was for Italy like the extra chemical whose addition to a compound dissolves certain intractable elements. The new enthusiasm for the war brought her into exact line with her Allies. On May 23, 1915, she had broken with Austria-Hungary, and the Triple Alliance was at an end; on 20th August of the same year she had declared war on Turkey, and on 19th October on Bulgaria; but with Germany she still remained formally at peace. Her reasons for this anomalous situation were mainly domestic, and no Ally questioned their validity, the more especially as against one member of the Teutonic League she was waging a whole-hearted struggle. But the financial and ecclesiastical difficulties which stood in the way of a final break with Germany gradually disappeared during the first year of war. Germany was

the supreme fount of offence, and a contest with any one of her allies must bring a nation face to face with that Prussian creed which civilized Europe had vowed to destroy. Nor was she herself slow to give Italy specific grounds for hostility. She surrendered to Austria Italian prisoners of war who escaped to German soil; she directed her banks to regard Italian subjects as alien enemies, and to postpone all payments owing to them; she suspended the payment of pensions due to Italian workmen. By the summer of 1916 the nominal peace was the merest comedy. It was Germany who supplied Austria, Italy's direct opponent, with her chief munitions of war; it was German officers and German soldiers and sailors who largely directed every operation against Italy; it was only by Germany's assistance that the Archduke Charles had been able to concentrate for the Trentino offensive. The contrast between the situations *de facto* and *de jure* had become too glaring to continue. Cadorna's success cleared the air. The new national spirit demanded that truth should be spoken and facts recognized. Accordingly, on 27th August the Government declared in the King's name that Italy considered herself as from 28th August in a state of war with Germany, and begged Switzerland to convey the intimation to Berlin. So completely farcical had been the previous peace that the declaration involved no single change in the conduct of the campaign.

The capture of Gorizia was an important step, but the nature of the country made it no more than a first step, and those who spoke glibly of a dash for Laibach or Trieste had small acquaintance with the intricate landscape. North of Gorizia the Isonzo runs in a deep trench, its eastern bank rises in sharp wooded ridges to the height of nearly 2,000 feet, and from its crest runs north-east the great Bainsizza plateau between the Isonzo and the Val Chiapovano. South of this last glen, and at right angles to the main river, the southern rim of the Ternovanerwald stretches eastward, with its peaks of Monte San Gabriele and Monte San Daniele defending the Gorizian plain from the north. Till these were mastered, there could be no advance from Gorizia along the railway to Trieste. East of the city the Austrians held the low wooded ridge of San Marco, and the east bank of the Vertoibizza up to the edge of the Carso, along whose foot flowed from the east the little river Vippacco. The western Carso had already been won, but the Carso east of the Vallone was a harder problem. Desolate and stony in the interior, it had shaggy wooded fringes—the

ridge above the Vippacco in the north, and in the south Hermada and the coast foothills. Its tableland was tilted towards the north-east, where it ascended from the Vallone in a great staircase to the crest called the Iron Gates, south of Dornberg.

It is necessary to recapitulate this topography that the strength of the Austrian position may be understood. Two facts must be kept in mind. The first is, that no advance eastwards through the Gorizian plain was practicable till Santo, Gabriele, and Daniele, the rim of the Ternovanerwald, had been won, and that to win these points the Italians must first scale the steep ridge east of the Isonzo and carry the Bainsizza plateau. The second is, that for the same advance the Carso must be carried, and that with every mile the place became a stronger fortress. To force the ridge of the Iron Gates by direct attack was impracticable, and the best chance was a turning movement by the south. But to block this rose Hermada, one labyrinth of tunnels and trenches, and bristling with guns. The task before Cadorna was a slow and formidable one, and could only be performed by patient stages. Moreover, it must be performed by alternate blows—now at the Santo ridge, now on the Carso, for each demanded a full concentration. Till Gabriele and Daniele were won in the north and Hermada on the south, the Austrians in Trieste might sleep secure.

The Carso was fixed as the theatre of the next movement, and something like a month was occupied in preparation. The Italian line—the Third Army—now ran from the Vippacco, east of the hill called Nad Logem, east of Oppacchiasella, west of the hamlet of Nova Vas, east of the lake of Doberdo, and thence to the coast marshes about Porto Rosega. On the morning of 14th September a great bombardment began between the Vippacco and the sea, in which the *bombarda*, the giant 11-inch trench mortar, played a chief part. Just after midday a thunderstorm broke on the Carso, and when, in the early afternoon, the Italian infantry advanced it was in a downpour of rain. In the centre, east of Nad Logem, they succeeded at once, and took large numbers of prisoners. On the right there was desperate fighting around Nova Vas and Hill 208 to the south, and no impression was made on the extreme right, where Hills 144 and 77 were supported by the guns from Hermada. On the left the Italians surrounded the little hill where stood San Grado di Merna.

All night thunderstorms rattled among the stony scarps, and with the wet dawn the batteries began again. At midday on the 15th came the next attack, which gave the Italians San Grado as

well as some gains at Lokvica * and Oppacchiasella. Next day, the 16th, the line was farther advanced, and on the following day Austrian counter-attacks were decisively repulsed. So far, in the four days' battle, the Duke of Aosta had taken between 4,000 and 5,000 prisoners, but he had not won any vital position. The Austrians showed the most dogged tenacity in defence, and they were well served by the nature of their fortifications. To quote from an Italian communiqué: "Their new trenches had been prepared months ago, and had been strengthened and deepened as soon as the Italian offensive which resulted in the taking of Gorizia began. Many of these were blasted out of the rock to the depth of about six feet, faced with a low parapet of sandbags, and protected with steel shields, as experience had taught the Austrians not to use stones in the construction of their breastworks, and to avoid offering even the smallest target to the Italian artillery and trench mortars. Moreover, caverns and deep dug-outs protected the defenders during bombardment. The undulating ground, broken by innumerable crater-like holes in the limestone, and here and there covered by small woods, lends itself admirably to obstinate resistance with concealed emplacements and hidden machine guns. Everywhere they had barbed-wire entanglements, much of which, being concealed, escaped destruction."

Once more the Italian bombardment was renewed, and with it came the rain. Low mists hung over the plateau, observation from the air was impossible, and it was not till 10th October that the next attack was made. The infantry of the Third Army advanced at 2.45 p.m. in a thin fog, and were immediately successful. They straightened out the kinks which had been left from the September battle, winning notably the remainder of the

* A short list may be given of the chief place-names which are spelled differently on Austrian and on Italian maps:—

Austrian.	*Italian.*
Flitsch.	Plezzo.
Tolmein.	Tolmino.
Görz.	Gorizia.
Wippach.	Vippacco (sometimes Frigido).
Volkovnjak.	Vugognacco.
Fajti Hrib.	Faiti or Dosso Faiti.
Kuk.	Monte Kuk, Cucco, Coceo.
Nova Vas.	Villanova.
Kostanjevica.	Castagnevizza.
Hudi Log.	Boscomalo.
Lukatic.	Locati.
Hermada.	Querceto.
Lokvica.	Locvizza.

Hill 208 position, and Hill 144 east of Lake Doberdo. The Italian front now ran nearly straight from Hill 144 to the Vippacco, and included the whole of the old Austrian front which had been attacked in September. Next morning, 11th October, the Austrians counter-attacked in dense fog, especially against the Italian left. In the afternoon, when the weather had cleared, the Italians again advanced, and during that night and the following day there was a fierce struggle for Sober and the new line on Hill 144. At Sober alone, on a single battalion front, 400 dead were counted. That afternoon the Italians carried the hill of Pecinka in the centre, and got into the outskirts of the villages of Lokvica and Hudi Log, more than a mile east of Nova Vas. Once more the line was as serrated as it had been in September.

On the 13th, in wild weather, the Duke of Aosta's left pushed north of Sober to the Gorizia–Prvacina road, and brought their capture of prisoners up to 8,000. But the continuing tempest—the same chain of gales which dislocated the British plans on the Somme—forced the battle to a standstill, and compelled the Italians to withdraw a little from Pecinka, Lokvica, and Hudi Log. For a fortnight the rains continued, and then very slowly the mists began to rise, and a chill, the first hint of winter, crept into the air. On 30th October the skies were clear, and from dawn to dusk there was such a bombardment as even the Carso had not seen. Fog had settled on the ridges again, but it was the fog of powdered earth, splintered stone, and the fumes of the great shells. The guns roared all night, and on the morning of the 31st, at ten minutes past eleven, the Italian infantry crossed the parapets, to be met with a hurricane of shrapnel as soon as they showed in the open. On the left the 11th Corps won back all the ground that had been relinquished, carried Pecinka and Lokvica, and within an hour, by a brilliant flanking movement, had the summit of Veliki Hrib. Thence they swept on to the hill named 376. The Italian centre south of Lokvica moved along the Oppacchiasella–Kostanjevica road, and came within a thousand yards of the latter place. The right wing, operating along the southern rim of the Carso plateau, took Hill 238 and the village of Jamiano, but could not maintain itself against the fire from the Hermada guns. That hollow east of Hill 144, the southern end of the Vallone, became a nether pit of smoke and death.

The day had been for the Third Army a remarkable victory, for on a front of more than two miles, between the north edge of the Carso and the Oppacchiasella–Kostanjevica road, the Austrian

line had been shattered. A large number of enemy batteries were taken, and nearly 5,000 prisoners, including 132 officers. But a pronounced salient had been created, and a salient is always liable to a counter-stroke. The Austrians had been so roughly handled that it was not till 2nd November that their guns woke. All the ground won by the Italian centre was plastered with shells, and since the Italians were largely in the open, the old trenches having been destroyed, their sufferings were severe. Of the Bersaglieri brigade which had taken Pecinka there is told a fine tale. All night the brigadier and the commanders of the 6th and 12th Regiments walked up and down the front line to give confidence to their men, and in the morning of the three only one was left. About midday the enemy launched his infantry against Pecinka and Hill 308, in order to drive a wedge into the salient. He failed, and the Italians again swept forward, taking Hill 399 and the crowning position of Fajti Hrib.

Fajti Hrib is the highest point of the step of the great staircase which runs from the Vippacco to Kostanjevica. It commanded the last-named village and also the road which ran to the east from north to south across the plateau. The situation was grave for the enemy's centre, but for the moment he had to content himself with fruitless counter-attacks on the flanks. The Italian salient was now as deep as it was broad—some two miles each way—and the danger of a counter-attack at the re-entrants was great. But on 3rd November a division moved downhill from the rim of the Carso and occupied the line of the Vippacco west of Biglia, and so protected the northern flank of the salient. Farther south during the same day other troops occupied Hill 291, and came within 200 yards of Kostanjevica. In the three days' fighting the Third Army had taken 8,750 prisoners, including 270 officers.

The Austrians were now back everywhere on their third line. Part of it, from the Vippacco to Kostanjevica, was an improvised line constructed during the September attack. But from Kostanjevica south it was largely the old first line, made long before Gorizia fell, and moreover its strength was increased by the formidable concealed batteries on Hermada. It was clear that Hermada was the real obstacle, and that no progress could be made till a way was found of taking order with it. This meant a great concentration of guns and a halt for preparations ; but meantime the winter closed down, and, though all through December Cadorna waited in readiness hoping for fine weather, about Christmas he

had to abandon his plan, and postpone the next effort to the spring. During November and December the rain fell in sheets: every ravine was a torrent, and every depression a morass. The *bora* scourged the bleak uplands, and with the new year came frost and snow, so that the Isonzo front was scarcely less arctic than the glacier posts in Trentino or the icy eyries in the Dolomites. It was a bitter winter for the front lines; but through it all a perpetual toil went on to improve positions, to contrive gun emplacements, to complete a network of communication trenches, in preparation for the campaign which the next season would bring. The troops could look back upon four months of brilliant achievement. But Italy was now at war with Germany as well as with Austria, and her High Command had little doubt that 1917 would prove a supreme test of their country's valour and resolution.

On Tuesday, 21st November, the Emperor Francis Joseph died. He was in his eighty-sixth year—the oldest sovereign in the world. He had reigned for sixty-eight years, having begun his active political life just after the fall of Metternich. He had fought many wars, and had nearly always been beaten; he had had to yield time and again his most cherished convictions; he had suffered the deepest public and private sorrows; and in the end he had come to be regarded as one of the permanent things in Europe from his sheer length of life and tenacity in suffering. He was the last believer in the old theory of the divine right of monarchs (for the German Emperor held a more modern variant), and his passionate faith gave him strength and constancy. To this creed everything was sacrificed—ease, family affection, private honour, the well-being of individuals and of nations—until he became an inhuman monarchical machine, grinding out decisions like an automaton. His age and his afflictions persuaded the world to judge him kindly, and indeed the tragic loneliness of his life made the predominant feeling one of pity. But if we try him by any serious standard, we cannot set him among the good sovereigns of the world, and still less among the great. He gravely misruled the peoples entrusted to his care, he brought misfortunes upon Europe, and in the end he left his country ruined, bleeding, and bankrupt. The cause he fought for was not noble or wise, but only a sumptuous egotism. At no time in his career had he any true perception of the forces at work in the world. He broke his head against new powers which he did not foresee, and then sat in the dust to be commiserated. The tragedy lay in a mind

so sparsely furnished being charged with the control of such mighty destinies. He was a self-deceiver, living in a fanciful world of his own to which he feebly sought to make facts conform. He had the dignity and patience of his strange house, and in the fullest degree the essential Hapsburg weakness.

His successor on the throne was his great-nephew, the Archduke Charles Francis Joseph, the son of that Archduke Otto who was the younger brother of the murdered Francis Ferdinand. He was in his thirtieth year, and had lately been commanding in chief on the southern section of the Eastern front. The new Emperor had some of the characteristics of his father, and shared in his personal popularity. He was known as a good sportsman and a young man of frank and engaging manners; but he had scarcely the education to fit him to sit on the most difficult throne in Europe. He was reported to have shared the trialist views of his uncle, the Archduke Francis Ferdinand, and his two years of campaigning had done something to sour his temper towards the martinets of Berlin. He wished to safeguard the remains of his sovereignty, and it was believed that he might show a certain independence in policy. If he accepted *Mitteleuropa*, it would be because of the interests of Austria-Hungary and not from subservience to his German ally.

CHAPTER LXVI.

THE WINTER OF 1916 IN EASTERN AND SOUTH-EASTERN EUROPE.

August 25, 1916–*January* 29, 1917.

The Allies advance in Macedonia—Capture of Monastir—Venizelos leaves Athens for Salonika—Disorders in Athens and Submission of Greek Government—Difficulties in Way of Allied Policy—Falkenhayn reaches the Sereth—Rumanian Coalition Government at Jassy—Meeting of Russian Duma—Miliukov's Indictment of the Government.

(*Maps*, pp. 274, 252.)

I.

We left the narrative of the Salonika campaign at the close of August, when the Bulgarian offensive had carried the troops of Todorov's II. Army to the gates of Kavala. The northern forts were occupied on 25th August, and on 14th September the invaders entered the town itself. Then followed strange doings. The bulk of the 4th Greek Corps, stationed in the place, along with one Colonel Hatzopoulos its commander, surrendered itself without a blow to the enemy, and was carried to Germany as "guests" of the German Government. One portion, the 6th Division, under Colonel Christodoulos, succeeded in making its way by Thasos to Salonika, to join the Allied forces. The Athens Government repudiated the action of the commander of the 4th Corps, alleging that he had strict orders, in case of necessity, to transport his troops to Volo. But over these instructions, as over the similar case of the surrender of Fort Rupel, there hung a mist of doubt and suspicion, a doubt which has since been turned into a damning certainty by the publication of the correspondence between Athens and Berlin. The surrender was not only acquiesced in, but invited.

Rumania had begun her campaign, and it behoved Sarrail to play his part in detaining her enemies. But the events of August had made it very clear to him that no offensive could succeed by way of the Vardar and Struma valleys. The enemy was too strongly

in force, and the country was too difficult. His one hope lay in the west, where, not too remote from the Allied lines, lay Monastir, the most cherished of Bulgaria's gains—a city which the enemy might be trusted to fight hard to retain. In that quarter was to be found a possible objective in the military sense, and at the same time a certain means of engaging Bulgaria's attention. Accordingly the bulk of Cordonnier's French force, the Serbian Corps under Mishitch, and the Russian contingent were allocated to the advance west of the Vardar. By the last day of August, except for a French mounted detachment, the whole front from the Vardar eastwards was in British hands.

The task of General Milne was that of controlling the Bulgarian II. Army so that it should not send reinforcements to the I. Army in the Monastir section. His methods were artillery bombardments and well-organized raids into the enemy lines. He slowly made ground, till by the end of the year he had advanced the British front east of the Struma, and had prepared a position secure from assault, and formidable enough to detain large enemy forces. On 10th September the Struma was crossed at five places above Lake Tahinos, and a number of villages occupied. Five days later there was a second successful crossing in the same area, and yet another on the 23rd, when the sudden rising of the river made operations difficult. Between 11th and 13th September the Bulgarian front between the Vardar and Lake Doiran was heavily bombarded at a point where it formed a salient, and the subsequent infantry attack inflicted severe losses on the enemy. Towards the close of the month, in order to co-operate with the impending attack on Florina, preparations were made for a more prolonged effort beyond the Struma. Bridges were improvised between Orljak and Lake Tahinos, and on the night of 29th September our infantry crossed. On the 30th one brigade carried various villages, beat off counter-attacks, and by 2nd October had consolidated its position. On the 3rd another brigade won the village of Yenikoi, on the main road from Seres to Salonika. The Bulgarians counter-attacked desperately during the afternoon and evening, but by the following morning our ground was secure. On the 5th, Nevolien, a hamlet north of the highroad, was taken, and on the 7th we flung forward a cavalry reconnaissance which located the enemy on the railway between Demir Hissar and Seres. Presently we were astride the line, and the Bulgarians took up strong positions on the high ground to the eastward. On 1st November we captured Barakli Djuma, six miles south-west of Demir Hissar, taking over

three hundred prisoners, and strengthened our hold on the railway north of Seres. But the floods of the Struma, the wintry weather, and the strength of the enemy prevented us from undertaking any larger movement. In artillery work we had shown ourselves conspicuously superior to the Bulgarians, and our activity of the autumn won us immunity from attack during the winter trench warfare. The British had performed the task assigned to them, and immobilized Todorov while Sarrail's left wing was creeping nearer to Monastir.

At the end of August the Bulgarian I. Army was still advancing, and there was fierce fighting on the northern shore of Lake Ostrovo. By the last day of the month that offensive had been definitely checked, and on 7th September the Allied attack began. On the extreme left, in Albania, the Italians were in motion east of Avlona. The main front directed against Monastir was held by the Serbian Corps on the right, and by the French and Russians on the left. The city lies at the mouth of a gorge on the western side of the Pelagonian plain. East of it the river Tcherna flows southward, and then turns to the north in a wide curve, containing in its loop a number of minor ridges of hills. The Salonika road and railway ran south also, west of the Tcherna curve, to the Greek border and Florina, crossed the watershed, and turned along the north shore of Lake Ostrovo. Between that lake and the Tcherna loop lies the Moglena range of mountains, close on 8,000 feet high, which separates Greece from south-western Macedonia. Against an enemy advancing from the south-east Monastir was well protected. Whoever held the Moglena crest could bar all access to the plain; and even when the frontier was passed, strong lines of defence were possible by means of the various tributaries entering the Tcherna from the west. Sarrail's plan was simple. The Serbians were directed from the Vodena–Lake Ostrovo line against the Moglena ridge, while farther west the French and Russians moved on Florina and the southern entrance to the Monastir plain. If the mountains were won and the advance pushed beyond them, it was clear that any defensive position in the south of that plain would be turned on its eastern flank, and once the hills in the Tcherna loop were carried the city would fall.

The Serbians began their main advance on 7th September, at a time when the valleys were yellow with ripening millet, and the orchards around the little villages were heavy with fruit. West and north of Lake Ostrovo they progressed in a series of bounds, making brilliant use of their field guns, and storming the enemy

trenches on the slopes with hand grenade and bayonet. They were fighting for revenge, and every foot gained brought them nearer to their native soil. Their left wing moved towards Banitsa, and their centre and right against the *massif* of Kaymakchalan, the highest point of the Moglena range. On the 14th they took Ekshisu, on the railway between Ostrovo and Florina, by a dashing cavalry charge, and pushed their front well up the steep ridge to the north. On the 16th the Franco-Russian force, sweeping in a wide curve south-west of Lake Ostrovo, was close on the Greek town of Florina, which the Bulgarians had taken a month before. Four days later the Serbians stormed the summit of Kaymakchalan, and there for the first time re-entered their native land. That morning also, after a battle which lasted all the previous day and night, the Franco-Russian troops carried Florina by assault. The Allies were now in the Monastir plain, their left moving up the railway, their centre approaching the Tcherna loop, and their right on the top of the flanking mountains. The men on the hilltops were looking over the empty fields and yellowing vineyards to the red roofs and shining white walls and minarets of the most ancient of Balkan cities.

To defend Monastir there were three main lines of entrenchments. One ran north of Florina and south of the Greek frontier; a second lay from the western hills through the village of Kenali to the loop of the Tcherna; while a third followed the little river Bistritza just south of the city itself. The key to the whole position was Kaymakchalan, and to regain this the Bulgarians made many desperate and fruitless counter-attacks. On the 26th at dawn came such a venture, which was broken before the sun rose. Late on the night of the 27th four different assaults were launched, one of which succeeded in taking the advanced Serbian line on the northern slope; but the crest remained in the Allied hands. Two days later Mishitch made another bound forward, and pushed his front one and a quarter miles north of Kaymakchalan, spreading also down the slopes towards the Tcherna. The result was to outflank the first Bulgarian position for the defence of the Monastir plain, and to drive the enemy back to the Kenali lines, only ten miles from the city.

While the French and Russians faced Kenali from the plain, it was the task of Mishitch to continue the outflanking movement by crossing the Tcherna and winning the ridges in the loop of the river. The bridges had been destroyed, but by 5th October the river had been crossed in the region of Brod and Dobraveni. The

Serbians now held twenty-five miles of frontier, and had regained ninety square miles of their own land, including seven villages. Ludendorff was compelled to take action. He had already had friction with the Bulgarian Headquarters, and he now insisted that the armies on that front should be made a group under German command, and Otto von Below was brought south from Courland for the task. The Kenali position was virtually impregnable to a frontal attack, and it was hoped to hold Mishitch among the ridges inside the loop once the river was crossed.

The next great assault came on 14th October. After a heavy artillery preparation the infantry went into action at one o'clock in the morning all along the line. But the position was too strong to be carried by a frontal assault, and little was achieved. On the 17th the Serbians attacked north of the Tcherna, and forced their way well into the loop, getting behind the main alignment of the Kenali position. On the 19th they were nearly four miles north of Brod. Then on 21st October the weather broke, and Sarrail had to endure the same obstacles from rainstorms which were at the moment delaying the British advance on the Somme. In drenching wet and fog the fighting in the Tcherna hills slowed down. The opportunity was taken by Winckler to strengthen his front and bring up his reserves, and for a little it looked as if the chance of the Allies had gone for the year. The new arrivals counter-attacked on the 22nd, but Mishitch held his ground in the loop, and in some places advanced his line. During the last week of October these attacks were many times repeated, while the French and Russians bombarded their fourteen-mile front, aiming especially at preventing the movement of troops from one bank of the Tcherna to the other.

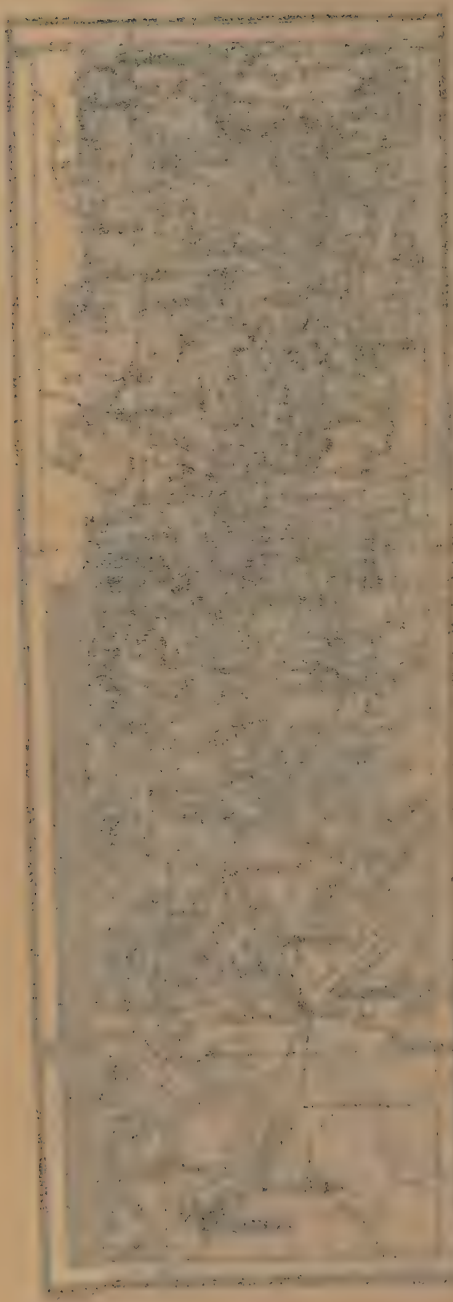
On 14th and 15th November Mishitch struck again. He moved forward in the loop, taking 1,000 prisoners, mostly Germans, and reaching a point only a dozen miles from Monastir. This victory spelled the doom of the Kenali lines, now hopelessly outflanked. Violent counter-attacks failed to delay the Allied progress, for on the 14th the French and Russians broke into the Kenali front fighting in a sea of mud, and early on the 15th it was found that the enemy had evacuated the position and fallen back to the Bistritza, less than four miles from Monastir. The Bulgarian line now ran in the loop of the Tcherna through Jaratok and Iven, with the Serbians close on their trail.

The city was all but won, for if the Kenali lines which Mackensen had prepared a year before could not be held, there was little

THE SALONIKA FRONT.

(*Facing p. 274.*)

THE MAPPA CO., LTD., LONDON.



hope for those on the Bistritza, which were only a month old. Thursday, the 16th, was a day of rain and fog, and the Serbians, who now, as before, had the vital task, could not make progress. But Friday was clear and bright, and after severe fighting Mishitch carried before evening Hill 1,212, north of Jaratok. One height only remained, that marked in the map 1,378, before the Serbians would be masters of all the high ground in the Tcherna loop, and be able to descend upon the Prilep road north of Monastir, and cut off the retreat of the enemy forces. On Saturday, the 18th, late in the evening, Hill 1,378 fell, and at daybreak on the 19th the Serbians were in Makovo and Dobromir, and so well to the north-east of Monastir.

Winckler retreated while yet there was time. At 8.15 a.m. on Sunday, the 19th, the last German battalion hastened out along the Prilep road, and at 8.30 French cavalry were in the streets. At nine came the first French infantry, and then a Russian battalion, and then an Italian detachment which had come in on the extreme left. Later in the day from across the Tcherna the Serbians arrived in their recovered city. To them the fall of Monastir was mainly due, for by their brilliant flanking movements, first at Kaymakchalan and then in the Tcherna loop, they had rendered futile the enemy's long-prepared defences. It was an auspicious omen that they entered Monastir on the anniversary of the day on which, four years before, their troops had wrested it from the Turks.

The enemy had fallen back a dozen miles towards Prilep. He was not pursued, for at that season of the year advance was difficult. The snowy Babuna mountains barred the northern exits from the plain. The country around Monastir was cleared, however, in a wide radius, and on 27th November the hill marked 1,050, between Makovo and the Tcherna, which if held by the enemy would have been a thorn in the side of the Allies, was brilliantly carried by French Zouaves. There were minor actions during December, but by the end of the year the fighting on the whole Salonika front had returned to the normal conditions of trench warfare. The campaign, though it did not bring relief to Rumania, had not wholly failed. It had compelled Ludendorff to divert to Macedonia several Jäger battalions that had been destined for Orsova. It had restored to Serbia a famous city as an earnest of greater things, and it had proved to the world, if proof were needed, the heroic steadfastness of her exiled sons. The cautious and nerveless strategy of Sarrail crippled the genius of the Serbian

commander, for had Mishitch been given the free use of the reserves, Prilep also might have fallen to his hand.

During the operations in the north the political situation in Greece was marching steadily to a deeper confusion. We have seen that the surrender of Fort Rupel had been succeeded on 6th June by an Allied blockade of Greek shipping, and that the unsatisfactory partial demobilization which M. Skouloudis's Government announced had been followed by an Allied ultimatum which led to the formation of a "Service" Cabinet under M. Zaimis. The new Government was non-party in character, and was pledged to carry out in their entirety the Allied demands. Its intention was to proceed with new elections so soon as the army had been demobilized, and it seemed probable that these elections would take place in the middle of August. But the activity of the Reservists' Leagues all over the land made it necessary to retard the elections, which on 16th August were definitely fixed for 8th October. Then came the Bulgarian invasion, and the occupation of the better part of eastern Macedonia. The loss of so large a slice of Greek territory put any general election out of the question. The surrender of the 4th Corps to the enemy, and the open approval given by the military authorities to the extension of the Reservists' Leagues had brought things to a pass where normal constitutional machinery had little meaning.

On 27th August M. Venizelos addressed a mass meeting in Athens to protest against the Government's attitude towards the Bulgarian invasion. He declared that the only policy which could save Greece would be for the King to put himself at the head of the nation, to remove his evil counsellors, and to take into his full confidence the Prime Minister, on whom the Venizelist party were willing to bestow their complete trust. The appeal met with no response from the King, who refused to receive a Venizelist deputation, or from the anti-Venizelist parties, which continued to organize Royalist demonstrations. M. Zaimis found the task too hard for him. Surrounded by pitfalls, and staggered by the situation in Macedonia, he contented himself with doing nothing. His hesitation played into the hands of the more extreme element among the Venizelists, and on 30th August a revolution broke out at Salonika. The Cretan gendarmerie and the Macedonian volunteers were the chief movers, and a Committee of National Defence was formed, under the presidency of Zimbrakakis, an artillery colonel, and the Venizelist deputy for Seres. After some

disorder General Sarrail interposed to prevent bloodshed, and the troops of the Greek 9th Division, quartered at Salonika, either joined the movement or allowed themselves to be disarmed. Those officers who refused to join were permitted to go to Athens, where they were received by the King and publicly thanked for their loyalty.

Meantime, on 1st September, an Allied squadron, consisting of twenty-three warships and seven transports, had arrived from Salonika, and anchored four miles outside the Piræus. The Allies demanded the arrest and deportation of Baron Schenk and the other German agents whose propaganda was exercising a malign influence, and the instant suppression of the Reservist Leagues. Enraged by these demands, a body of Reservists on 9th September demonstrated against the Allies in the gardens of the French Legation. M. Zaimis promised satisfaction for the outrage, but found himself unable to cope with the anarchical movements now breaking out everywhere in the land. On 11th September he handed in his resignation. He was an honourable and patriotic man, who in 1897 had concluded the peace with Turkey, and in 1906 had succeeded Prince George as High Commissioner of Crete. But his sixty-five years lay heavy on him, and his character was not masterful enough for so fierce a crisis.

The King sent for M. Dimitrakopoulos, who had been in the Venizelos Cabinet in 1912, and had since then led a small independent party. He attempted to form an ordinary political Ministry, but this the Allies were unable to accept. On 16th September the anti-Venizelist deputy, M. Kalogeropoulos, was invited to construct a Government. His selection included M. Rouphos, an Achæan deputy and a violent anti-Venizelist, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs was M. Karapanos, whose sympathies had always been anti-Ally. The new Cabinet was, in fact, purely partisan, and therefore a defiance of the Note of 21st June. M. Kalogeropoulos promised the Allies a policy of "very benevolent neutrality," declared that as soon as might be he would transform his Cabinet into a "Service" Ministry, and disavowed the performance of the 4th Corps at Kavala. But in spite of his professions the Allies refused to recognize him.

Meantime the Venizelist movement was taking on a new character. On 22nd September M. Venizelos told an interviewer at Athens: "If the King will not hear the voice of the people, we must ourselves devise what it is best to do. I do not know what that will be; but a long continuation of the present situation

would be intolerable. Already we have suffered all the agonies of a disastrous war, while remaining neutral." That same day a battalion of the Greek Revolutionary Army at Salonika left for the front. "You are going," Zimbrakakis told them, "to fight and expel the enemy who has invaded our native soil." On the 24th a revolution broke out at Candia, and in ten days the insurgent forces, estimated at 30,000, were in complete control of Crete. Elsewhere among the islands, at Mytilene and Samos and Chios, there were similar movements. Some of the leading Greek generals notified the King of their view that the country's interests demanded immediate war with Bulgaria. Some seventy deputies, till then anti-Venizelist, presented a memorial in favour of intervention. Late on the night of the 24th M. Venizelos took action. He left Athens, like some new Aristides, that he might the better return. Accompanied by Admiral Kondouriotis, the Commander-in-Chief of the Greek Navy, and many of his followers, he crossed to Crete. "I am leaving," he said, "in order to proceed to the Greek islands to head the movement which has already begun for action against the Bulgarian invader. . . . Do not think I am heading a revolution in the ordinary sense of the word. The movement now beginning is in no way directed against the King or his dynasty. It is one made by those of us who can no longer stand aside and let our countrymen and our country be ravaged by the Bulgarian enemy. It is the last effort we can make to induce the King to come forth as King of the Hellenes, and to follow the path of duty in protection of his subjects. As soon as he takes the reins we, all of us, shall be glad and ready at once to follow his flag, as loyal citizens led by him against our country's foe." On 30th September a triumvirate, consisting of M. Venizelos, Admiral Kondouriotis, and General Danglis, was chosen to direct the destinies of the National movement which was soon to become a Provisional Government.

M. Kalogeropoulos's Ministry, now the most embarrassed of phantoms, continued to plead for recognition. It even promised, under certain conditions, intervention in the war. But the Allies remained obdurate, and on 5th October M. Kalogeropoulos gave up the hopeless task. Three days later a non-party "Service" Cabinet was constructed under Professor Lambros, who was no politician and not even a deputy. It was sworn in on 9th October, and on that day M. Venizelos, after a visit to some of the islands, arrived at Salonika, to be received with enthusiasm. He proceeded to form a Cabinet to direct the work of the National move-

ment, and at a Conference held by the Allies at Boulogne ten days later, his Provisional Government was granted a qualified recognition. From that moment Greece was practically, though not theoretically, divided into two hostile nations. All the conditions of civil war existed, save that the Allies were interposed between the combatants.

The Lambros Ministry had still to satisfy the demands of the Powers. On 11th October the French admiral Dartige du Fournet, commanding the Allied fleet, presented an ultimatum, demanding, as a precautionary measure, the handing over of the entire Greek fleet, with the exception of three vessels, by one o'clock in the afternoon, as well as the control of the Piræus–Larissa railway. The demands were complied with, and in order to preserve order while the terms were being fulfilled, it was found necessary on the 16th to land parties of Allied bluejackets to occupy points in the capital. French officers were also appointed to assume control of the Greek police. The affair passed off without disorder, and presently the sailors were re-embarked, but the King and his Cabinet were still far from an understanding with the Powers. The demobilization went slowly on, but there was much haggling over the surrender of munitions. About 25th October the decision of the Boulogne Conference was announced in Greece—a decision which satisfied neither party, though both claimed that their point of view had been recognized. The Venizelist Government in Salonika at once declared war on Bulgaria in conformity with what they conceived to be their position as allies of the Entente Powers. The Lambros Government, on the other hand, traded on its recognition by the Powers in order to refuse or delay the full satisfaction of the Powers' demands. One incident increased the bitterness. Two Greek ships were torpedoed outside the Piræus by a German submarine, and many lives were lost. Some of the passengers were Venizelists, and Germany announced her intention of sinking any ships carrying adherents of the Provisional Government. In that she was perfectly within her rights, and M. Lambros's Ministry seemed to accept the explanation as sufficient.

During November the position became daily more strained. On the 24th of the month Admiral du Fournet's patience was exhausted. He asked peremptorily for the surrender by 1st December of ten mountain batteries, and for the handing over of the remaining war material by 15th December. Failing compliance, he promised to take summary steps to enforce his orders. The long delay had bred a dangerous spirit in the Royalists, who

had come to believe that they could bluff the Allies indefinitely. On the last day of November nothing had been done, and during the early morning of 1st December French, British, and Italian troops were landed at the Piræus. The King had assured the Allied commanders that no disorder need be expected, so the contingents were small. They found the capital held in force by a Greek corps. The two sides came into collision, and with considerable bloodshed the landing-parties were borne back by weight of numbers. On this the Allied warships opened fire on the Greek positions, whereupon the King proposed an armistice, on condition that the bombardment ceased and the troops were re-embarked, offering also to hand over six batteries instead of the ten stipulated for in the Note. After some haggling the armistice was agreed upon. Meantime the Royalists, flushed by what they regarded as a victory, proceeded to insult the Allied Legations, and to rout out, maltreat, and in many cases murder the principal adherents of M. Venizelos in the city. The prisons were choked with innocent victims, and for a day or two mob rule was rampant in Athens. It was noted that many highly placed personages seemed to be personally superintending the campaign of outrage. A legend was invented later of a Venizelist plot—the common pretext of malefactors to cover their crimes.

The situation had become both farcical and tragic. The Allies had suffered a severe rebuff, and had allowed themselves to be fooled by an insignificant Court, a handful of Germanophil staff officers, and a rabble of discharged soldiers. A strict blockade of the Greek coasts was announced on 7th December. On the afternoon of 14th December an ultimatum was presented which required a reply within twenty-four hours. The Note demanded the withdrawal of the entire Greek force from Thessaly, and the transfer to the Peloponnesus of a large proportion of the Greek army. Failing compliance, the Allied Ministers were instructed to leave Greece, when a state of war would begin. The Greek Government, realizing that this time the Allies were not to be trifled with, accepted the ultimatum, but after their fashion began to quibble about the construction of the terms.

On 31st December a second Allied Note was delivered, containing the demands for military guarantees, and for reparation on account of the events of 1st and 2nd December. The Greek forces outside the Peloponnesus were to be reduced to the number absolutely required to maintain order, and the surplus disbanded. All armaments and munitions beyond the amount required for

this reduced force were to be transported to the Peloponnesus, as well as all machine guns and artillery of the Greek army. The situation thus established was to be maintained as long as the Allied Governments deemed it necessary. Civilians were forbidden to carry arms, and all Reservist meetings were prohibited north of the isthmus of Corinth. All political prisoners were to be immediately released, and the sufferers from the events of 1st and 2nd December were to be indemnified. The general responsible for the action of the 1st Corps on these dates was to be superseded. Finally, the Greek Government was to apologize to the Allied Ministers, and the British, French, Italian, and Russian flags were to be formally saluted in a public square in Athens in the presence of the Minister of War and the assembled garrison. Meantime the blockade would continue till every jot and tittle of the demands had been fulfilled.

Again the Athens Government quibbled, adopting the method of pleading known to English law as confession and avoidance. The anti-Venizelist persecution went on, and the Reservists continued their meetings. An evasive reply was delivered, and this brought a second ultimatum, based upon the decisions reached at the Rome Conference in the first week of 1917. King Constantine judged shrewdly that he had now arrived at the end of the Allied patience. He had been in constant correspondence with Berlin, and hoped that the situation would be saved by a German advance which would drive Sarrail into the sea. But Germany's obligations elsewhere did not permit of a Salonika offensive, and the King accordingly accepted the Allies' terms. On January 20, 1917, the transfer of the Greek forces to the Peloponnesus began. On 24th January the Greek Government formally apologized to the Allied Ministers. On Monday, 29th January, in front of the Zappeion, the Allied flags were solemnly saluted by soldiers and sailors representing all the Greek units left in Athens. The Reservist societies at the same time were dissolved by a legislative decree.

The Allied handling of the Greek problem had never been brilliant, but during the last months of 1916 it seemed to most observers in the West to reach a height of fatuity not often attained by mortal statecraft. Blunders there were without doubt, but facile criticism scarcely recognized the extreme difficulty in which the Allies were placed. Their one object was to win the war, to prevent any addition to the German resources, and to avoid burdening themselves with troublesome problems not germane to their military purpose. A united Greece as an ally was beyond

hope: the blunders of 1915 had made that impossible. The most they could look for was some arrangement which would protect their Salonika army from an assault in rear. They wished to keep Greece quiescent, to avoid having to fight a campaign in Thessaly or Attica as well as in Macedonia. It was too often forgotten by their critics that a state of civil war in Greece would be more troublesome from a military point of view than a Greek declaration of war against the Allies, for it would not be possible to use the fleets as a weapon. On the top of their grave preoccupations the Allies did not wish to have the ordering of the domestic affairs of a country none too easy to order.

This desire was intelligible and politic. The Allied policy in its details may well be criticized—ultimata which were not ultimate, pin-pricks which did not pierce the skin, Admiral du Fournet's landing-parties which were so ill-judged and ineffective. But when one plays a trimming game one is apt to wear the appearance of inefficiency. The Allies sought to keep the peace at almost any cost; they accepted two *de facto* Greek Governments; at the Rome Conference they tried to stereotype the arrangement and prevent either side from increasing its power. The whole situation was farcical, but let us recognize that the policy in the main succeeded. At the cost of the loss of every kind of international dignity official Greece was kept uneasily neutral.

There were many who advocated a more heroic course. Venizelos, they said, was the friend of the Allies, and the declared enemy of the Teutonic League. He had 30,000 men under arms, and, if allowed to make a levy in Greece, might soon have 100,000. Let the Allies do as Admiral Noel did in Crete—train their ships' guns on the Royal Palace, and compel an abdication. Let Venizelos be brought to Athens as Regent, and the Provisional Government established there. Let King Constantine retire to the Peloponnesus with his following, and let the isthmus of Corinth be an impassable barrier between north and south. Or, if such things were impossible, let Venizelos be acknowledged as the true ruler of Greece, the Allied legations removed to one of the islands, and Athens and south Greece left to dree their weird under a strict blockade. If either course were taken, it was argued, every Hellene worthy of the name would be fighting actively on the Allied side, and the King and his counsellors would be reduced to the impotence which was their proper destiny.

The objection to these heroic courses did not lie in any tenderness to the royal cause. King Constantine, trebly forsworn,

deserved small consideration. It reposed on two uncontroverted facts. In the first place, the Allies were not yet agreed in their estimate of Venizelos. France was his passionate defender, Britain his staunch admirer; but many elements in Italy looked askance on one whose ambitions for his country might presently conflict with Italian aspirations, and the Government then in power in Russia was naturally hostile to the man who had challenged a monarchy. In the second place, the Venizelists were by no means the whole of the Greek nation; by this time it was not even certain that they were the larger part. Too much was made of the Germanophilism of anti-Venizelist Greece. Except in the Court, a handful of politicians and the General Staff, there was little love for Germany. The opponents of Venizelos were partly his political opponents—the narrow politicians who could not look beyond parochial ends; they were partly the middle classes, who were afraid of bold ventures; they were very largely the Reservists, who strongly objected to be made to fight. They were all the creeping things that infest a court. They were simple conservatives, with a leaning to royalty. They were the ignorant and superstitious peasants who had that semi-religious veneration for a king which is common in the Orthodox Church. Anti-Venizelism included the baser elements in the nation; but it involved also elements, narrow and self-centred, indeed, but wholly respectable and honest. Venizelos drew to his standard all that was bold and generous and far-seeing in Hellenic life; but such men are rarely the majority in a nation. He preached a counsel of perfection which was a stumbling-block to commonplace minds. For the Allies at that moment to have definitely espoused his cause and set him up in power, would have rent the nation in two and delivered it over to civil war. If peace at all costs had to be preserved, a temporizing policy was the only course left to the embarrassed Allied statesmen.

A recognition of this truth need not blind us to the greatness of Venizelos's part and the exceeding dignity and resolution of his character. He was called to a harassing work—to make bricks without straw, to make war under bonds, to govern and at the same time to serve. He could not attack the dynasty, since he sought above all things Hellenic unity; but he had to wait in silence while that dynasty oppressed and murdered his supporters. He had to content himself with a half-hearted recognition by the Allies. He had to submit to restrictions on the natural increment of his following. He had to obey often what he thought was the

starkest folly. Yet at all times he took the larger view, and showed a patience and a noble absence of vanity which few leaders in history have excelled. "I have tried," to quote his own words, "not to cause any difficulties for my friends. I am told to evacuate Katerini—I evacuate Katerini. I am told to abandon Cerigo—I abandon Cerigo. A neutral zone is imposed on me—I respect the neutral zone. I am asked to bring my movement to a standstill—I bring it to a standstill." He was above all things a practical statesman, never losing sight of the end, but ready to change his means as the occasion demanded. He had seen unmoved the failure of his Cretan rising in 1897, and had promptly set himself to achieve his purpose by other methods. He had served the dynasty when Greece needed it; he was ready to oppose it when it played false to Greece. A passionate patriot, there was nothing parochial in his love for his country; he saw it as part of Europe, and no man was ever a better European. Others have had imagination and adventurous courage, but few have joined to these qualities the surest *flair* for the practicable and an unearthly patience. The vision and the fact, the poetry and the prose of life—it is not often that they find union in a single human soul.

II.

When Falkenhayn forced the line of the Aluta, and Bucharest and Ploeshti fell, the eyes of Rumania turned naturally to the line of the Sereth, which for forty years had been the foundation of her strategy of defence. She had originally devised the position as a bar to a Russian invasion—a defence of Wallachia, should Moldavia be overrun. The situation was now reversed. Wallachia had gone, the enemy was coming from the west, and the river was the last bulwark of Moldavia. The fortifications which she had raised there were out of date, and in any case their front was in the wrong direction; but the natural strength of the Sereth line remained the same. Its flanks rested securely on the Carpathians in the north and the marshy Danube delta in the south. The right wing of the defenders must hold the mountain glens which descend from the Oitoz and Gyimes passes, the centre the open valley east of Focsani, while the left wing had a strong position behind the swamps of the lower river between Nomoloasa and Galatz. Such a position involved the evacuation of the whole of the Dobrudja, and it required that the Moldavian passes from the Gyimes northward should stand intact. For the northern extension of the

Sereth line was the Trotus valley, running from the Gyimes to Okna; if that were forced, the position would be turned and Moldavia would be at the mercy of the invader.

By the end of the first week of December Falkenhayn and Mackensen,* now operating together on a front of less than a hundred miles between the Buzeu Pass and the Danube, were moving eastward against the line of the Buzeu River and the lower Jalomitza. Their extreme right wing in the Dobrudja, the Bulgarian III. Army, had for its object the clearing of that district, the ultimate crossing of the Danube below Galatz, and the invasion of Bessarabia. On their left the Austrian I. Army was to attempt the forcing of the passes north of the Oitoz. The Rumanian campaign had now a very direct bearing upon the whole Russian position in the Bukovina and Galicia. If the Moldavian passes were forced, Lechitski would be outflanked and compelled to retire from the Bukovina, and the gains of the summer south of the Dniester would be lost. This fact, combined with the extreme fatigue of the Rumanian forces, meant that the campaign must now be in Russia's hands. Her reinforcements had at last arrived —reinforcements which, if they had come earlier, might have prevented the loss of Wallachia. Gourko, who was acting as Chief of Staff during Alexeiev's illness, did his best; but he had much leeway to make up, and the Rumanian railways were utterly disorganized. Lechitski's left wing, a reserve corps under Denikin, had, since the beginning of November, taken over the defence of the Moldavian passes. Sakharov was in command on the Danube; and after the fall of Bucharest was entrusted with the defence of the Sereth line, since the bulk of the Rumanians were withdrawn behind the front, to be reorganized under Averescu and Presan, now his Chief of Staff. The Rumanian sector had become the fourth division of the long Russian front.

The enemy movement was a wheel to the north-east, the left wing, under Falkenhayn, advancing slowly along the railway from Ploeshti to Rimnic Sarat, while Kosch moved faster in the region towards the river, and the Bulgarians in the Dobrudja swung due north against Sakharov. The weary Rumanian detachment which had been fighting in the Predeal district made its escape, not without heavy losses, from the Prahova valley, and fought a stout rearguard action east of Ploeshti, on the Cricovul River. But only delaying actions were possible. By 14th December Falken-

* Mackensen was now in command of a group, Kosch taking over the Danube army.

hayn was in the town of Buzeu, and Kosch was across the Jalomitza. On the 17th the former had passed the river Buzeu on a wide front, and the latter was just south of Filipeshti. That same day, in the Dobrudja, Sakharov had fallen back thirty miles to a line running through the town of Babadag.

The immediate enemy objectives north of the Danube were the towns of Rimnic Sarat and Braila, the only two Wallachian centres still uncaptured. Mackensen resolved to avoid a direct attack on Braila, and to carry it by a turning movement in the Dobrudja. He concentrated his main strength on Rimnic Sarat, and after a four days' battle, beginning on 22nd December, entered the town on 27th December, taking many prisoners. On Christmas Day Kosch carried Filipeshti, and the victory at Rimnic Sarat compelled the defence in that region to fall back to Perichora. The next move was with the Bulgarians in the Dobrudja. By 23rd December Sakharov's left had reached the Danube delta, and had crossed by the pontoon bridges at Tulcea and Isaccea to the Bessarabian shore. Beyond that there could be no movement, for the vast floating marshes of the delta, which are neither land nor water, defied the enemy. That same day Sakharov's remaining troops were concentrated in the extreme north-west corner of the district in front of the town of Machin. Machin lies at the point where the right branch of the river, which breaks off north of Hirshova, turns sharply to the west to join the left branch. It is only six miles from Braila, and formed its natural defence from the east. But such a position, with no good avenues of retreat, could not be safely held by Sakharov's remnant. On January 4, 1917, Machin was evacuated, and the Dobrudja was now wholly in the enemy's hands. The Rumanian retreat had here been most skilfully managed, for though it traversed a desperate country in the depths of winter, a country with scarcely a road and with a broad river to pass at the end, it lost no more than 6,000 men. The Bulgarian guns now opened against Braila, and since that place formed no part of the Sereth position, it was evacuated. On 5th January Kosch from the west and the Bulgarians from across the Danube joined hands in its streets. That same day the first German troops reached the Sereth east of the mouth of the Buzeu. The invaders were now in front of the final defences.

Falkenhayn, farther north, had still to come into line. Pivoting on Kosch's new position, he swung north-eastward towards Focsani. The strength of the Sereth line was known, and it was

on the left wing in the foothills, under Krafft von Delmensingen, that the success of the greater operations must depend. Before the Trotus valley is reached a number of lesser streams flow eastward to the Sereth; and the Trotus itself receives on its right bank various small affluents. Each of these glens formed a defensive outpost for the main Trotus line. Here Falkenhayn's extreme left was operating in conjunction with the right of the Austrian I. Army. The defence had not only to face the enemy advancing from the south-west, but also flanking attacks from the west and north through the high passes. For a fortnight—the first fortnight of 1917—a swaying battle was waged among the foothills. On 8th January Falkenhayn entered Focsani, and from Neneshti for thirty miles northward occupied the banks of the Sereth. But the limit had been reached, and the advance was stayed. We may take 15th January as the date at which the Rumanian retreat definitely ended. Wallachia had gone, but Moldavia was intact, and a line had been found on which the defence could abide.

It was not till the end of the month that Mackensen desisted from his efforts. On 19th January he attempted to force the centre opposite Fundeni, but after a bloody battle failed to do more than clear the west bank of the river. Such a frost had set in as the oldest peasant in Rumania could not remember. The temperature stood below zero for weeks on end, and the Bulgarians in the Dobrudja attempted to turn the weather to their advantage. On the morning of 23rd January, in a thick fog, they pushed through the frozen marshes of the Danube delta, and managed to cross the channel of the river north of Tulcea. It was a barren exploit, for the Rumanians fell upon and annihilated the detachment. The frost, which put the left flank of the defence in peril, was the salvation of the right flank in the mountains. Mackensen could not force the centre, and was compelled to depend upon his wings; but Krafft von Delmensingen and the Austrian I. Army found that the Carpathian winter immobilized them more effectively than any entrenchments of their opponents. A winter peace fell upon the hills.

The invader wreaked his vengeance upon hapless Wallachia. Disappointed in his hopes of great stores of grain and oil, he contented himself with introducing the methods of administration with which he had experimented in Belgium and Poland. He requisitioned everything, and left the people to starve. He compelled the whole civilian population between eighteen and forty-

two to work for him. He drove the embassies of neutral nations from Bucharest, that there might be no witnesses of his doings. He levied great sums as indemnities. He dispatched to Germany many members of the chief families as hostages, and used them as hostages have always been treated by a barbarous enemy. The Rumanian Government at Jassy could only look on in impotent wrath, and in its heart add new counts to the long reckoning. Meanwhile the Rumanian Parliament had met at Jassy on 22nd December, and King Ferdinand in his speech from the throne had endeavoured to encourage his people. "Our army has sustained the struggle according to the glorious traditions of our ancestors, and in a way which justifies us in regarding the future with perfect confidence. So far the war has imposed upon us great hardships and profound sacrifices. We shall bear them with courage, for we maintain a complete trust in the final victory of our allies; and in spite of difficulties and sufferings, we are determined to struggle by their side with energy unto the end. . . . Before the common peril we must all show an added patriotism and unity of heart and mind."

On the 24th a proof was given of the national unity by the formation of a Coalition Government, which included M. Take Jonescu and some members of his party. The old Conservatives had disappeared from practical politics. Carp, still living in dread of Russia, frankly announced that, since Rumania's victory must be Russia's victory, he desired Rumania to be beaten. Marghiloman refused Bratianu's offer to join the National Ministry, and remained in Bucharest, where he hobnobbed with his country's enemies. Meantime the Government at Jassy most wisely set about the reform of certain domestic abuses, the existence of which had crippled Rumania in war. A scheme of universal and direct suffrage was drawn up to replace the old electoral college system, under which the peasants and working classes had been virtually defranchised. Even more urgent was the question of land reform, for the Rumanian system of land tenure was still mediæval. Absentee landlords and speculative middlemen had divorced the peasant from the soil of his country. A scheme was prepared to give a large grant of Crown lands and to purchase vast areas compulsorily from the chief landowners, with the result that the percentage of the country under peasant proprietorship would rise from 53 to 85. Such reforms were an immediate necessity if the rank and file were to be sustained under their crushing burdens, and they were of vital import to the whole Alliance. They ex-

tended the principles of democracy within the ranks of those who were democracy's champions.

When, in the beginning of 1917, the Austro-German threat against the Sereth line was made manifest, Russia, according to the rules of sound strategy, attempted a diversion on another part of the front. Russki pushed westward from Riga on 5th January over the frozen marshes, and carried the village of Kalntsem, west of the great Tirul marsh, taking some 800 prisoners and sixteen guns. He was immediately counter-attacked, but managed to hold the ground won. On the 9th a second Russian attack was made about fifteen miles north of Dvinsk, and the island in the Dvina east of Glaudan was captured. The battle in the Riga sector continued for some days, and altogether thirty-two guns were taken. On the 24th a violent German counter-attack recovered some of the ground lost, taking about 1,000 prisoners. A second followed on the 30th, in the sector between Kalntsem and Lake Babit, and again there was a slight withdrawal. During the same month there was some fighting in the corner of the Bukovina between Dorna Watra and Kimpolung; but the divided command on that wing made success impossible, for Lechitski reported to Brussilov, the Rumanian armies to their King, and Sakharov direct to Alexeiev. All these actions were subsidiary to the Rumanian campaign, and meant no more than that Russia, when she believed that a bit of the enemy front had been weakened by the withdrawal of divisions to Mackensen, took the opportunity of testing its strength. In that fierce weather no large movement could be contemplated. A frozen marsh might give her the chance of a local attack, but the front as a whole was bound in the rigours of a Russian winter.

Even had the weather been favourable, it is doubtful whether Russia could have done more than devise here and there a small diversion. She was busy rearranging her forces for the conjoined Allied offensive of the new year, and had accumulated a reserve of some sixty fresh divisions. She had already sustained over four million casualties, and at the moment was maintaining about ten million men under arms. Alexeiev and Gourko were straining every nerve to complete the armament and training of the new troops. There was also another reason. For some months it had been growing fatally clear that the Government and the so-called governing classes were not the equal of the nation and the army. There were elements there of scandalous corruption; there

were sections whose sympathies were avowedly with German bureaucracy rather than with Russian freedom; there were many who feared democracy as a foul skin dreads cold water; there were sinister influences at work whose power lay in the erotic and neurotic mysticism of the East. All these dark things, fearing daylight and the will of a liberated people, had affinities with Germany, and could not face with comfort the defeat of the great absolutist Power. It was to such elements that Germany appealed in her attempts at a separate peace. The first was in the summer of 1915, when the reactionary ministers, Sukhomlinov, Shcheglovitov, and Maklakov, fell from power. That attempt was frustrated by the influence of the army and the Duma, which grew as the skies darkened during the Great Retreat. But the sun of prosperity in 1916 brought the parasites to life again. M. Boris Stürmer became Prime Minister in succession to M. Goremykin, and in August M. Sazonov, the Foreign Minister, and in many ways Russia's ablest civilian statesman, was dismissed, and his portfolio taken over by the Premier. Once again Germany made a bid, and with some hope of success.

The terms suggested as a basis for discussion embraced the opening of the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, the offer to Russia of Armenia and Persia, Eastern Galicia, the Bukovina, and part of Moldavia, an independent Poland with a Russian Grand Duke as king, and certain special rights for Germans in Lithuania and in the Baltic provinces. The proposals were reasonable and attractive, for Germany very seriously meant business. But there was never for one moment a chance of a separate peace. Had the Russian Government accepted any such overtures, there would have been a revolution next morning—a revolution both bloodless and final, for the Army would have engineered it. But the purblind eyes of the bureaucrats were not open to this certainty. There was a serious risk that they might commit themselves to some folly, and, in dread of popular reprisals, attempt to stir up an abortive revolt, which they could use as an excuse for stern reactionary measures. M. Protopopov was added to the Ministry, with the portfolio of the Interior, and this kindled the suspicions of patriotic Russia. He had been Vice-President of the Duma, an Octobrist and a member of the Progressist *bloc;* but for some unknown reason he had changed his side, apparently on his return from his visit to Britain in the spring, and had become an ally of the reactionaries.

On Tuesday, 14th November, the Duma met. It was a stormy

sitting, and the Ministry was torn to shreds by the Progressist critics. In especial, M. Miliukov, the leader of the Cadets, attacked the Premier in one of the most outspoken speeches ever made on Russian soil. He accused him of corruption and anti-patriotism, and he did not hesitate to name the dark forces behind him. Patriotic members of every group supported the Cadet leader, and M. Stürmer was left with the alternatives of dissolving the Duma or resigning. The Emperor refused to permit the first course, and accordingly the Premier went out of office, though not out of power, for he was immediately given a high Court appointment. His fall was brought about not only by M. Miliukov's speech, but by his mishandling of the food question and the Rumanian situation, and by the fact that the Army chiefs were to a man his opponents. He was succeeded by M. Trepov, who as Minister of Communications had done good work in the construction of the new railways. M. Trepov was a strong conservative, and far removed in sympathy from the *bloc;* but he was a Nationalist and an honest man, and he earnestly desired to come to a working agreement with the Duma, for he realized that on such an alliance Russia's military efficiency in the near future would largely depend. He was a statesman of the Stolypin type, who believed that somehow or other the work of Government must be carried on.

His aim was a Ministry of experts and business men, a mobilization of the best national talent. But he was handicapped from the start, for he was compelled to retain the deeply suspect M. Protopopov at the Interior. When the Duma met again on 2nd December after ten days' adjournment the situation was little easier. The new Premier was able to announce for the first time in public the agreement of 1915 between Russia, France, Britain, and Italy, which definitely established Russia's right to Constantinople and the Straits. He made an eloquent appeal to all parties to close up their ranks, and promised various domestic reforms; but he was heard impatiently, for so long as M. Protopopov remained in the Cabinet there could be no co-operation even with the conservative elements in the Duma. The demand of all the Nationalist parties was now the same—for Ministers who had the confidence of the nation. It was men and not measures that were sought; a Cabinet of single-minded statesmen who in civil life could reproduce something of the clean and steadfast purpose of the soldiers. It was an aim endorsed not only by the Duma but by the Council of the Empire and by the Congress of the Nobility.

With the new year it became plain to the world that Russia's political life was approaching a crisis. All her commands, both civil and military, seemed to be in the melting pot. General Schuvaiev, who had been Minister of War since March 1916, and had the complete confidence of the Duma, was removed in January, and his place given to a comparatively obscure soldier, General Bieliaev, who had the favour of the Court. At the same time an epidemic of ill-health fell upon other ministers, and three—the Ministers of Finance, Commerce, and Foreign Affairs—were granted sick leave. M. Trepov, having held the office of Premier for just six weeks, retired, and gave place to Prince N. D. Golitzin, an undisguised reactionary; and Count Ignatiev, the only Liberal member of the Ministry, was removed from the Department of Education. There were signs that the sinister influence of M. Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior, was growing. The Emperor, in a rescript to Prince Golitzin, outlined the duties of the Government—a procedure which had not been adopted since 1905, and which seemed to foreshadow a still further weakening of constitutional government and a relapse into autocracy. The food question, too, was growing serious. It had been scandalously mismanaged, and in a great grain-producing country like Russia food was scarcer among the people than with grain-importing belligerents who had all the difficulties of oversea transport. A dangerous spirit was rising in all classes of society, for it seemed clear that such a result could not have come about without corruption and bungling in high quarters. Finally, the armies at the front had much to complain of in the way of faulty transport and inadequate supplies.

The Emperor in his rescript touched upon these matters. "At the present moment," he wrote, "when the tide of the Great War has turned, all the thoughts of all Russians, without distinction of nationality or class, are directed towards the valiant and glorious defenders of our country, who with keen expectation are awaiting the decisive encounter with the enemy. In complete union with our faithful Allies, not entertaining any thought of a conclusion of peace until final victory has been secured, I firmly believe that the Russian people, supporting the burden of war with self-denial, will accomplish their duty to the end, not stopping at any sacrifice. The national resources of our country are unending, and there is no danger of their becoming exhausted, as is apparently the case with our enemies." This, said the ordinary Russian, was very well in its way; but the armies were not well supported, the poor

were not fed, and the blame for this did not lie upon the Russian people, who had no real say in the government. The events of January caused a dark shadow of doubt to creep over the face of the State. The people saw strange forces at work which they could not interpret, but which they profoundly mistrusted. The Government, patched and tinkered at by the autocracy, was inadequate to the temper of the nation. Russia was notoriously a slow and patient country, and shrewd observers on the spot about this time, while admitting that revolt some day was inevitable, considered that it would be postponed till peace. But those familiar with the incalculable ways of revolutions refrained from prophesying. They knew that during a period of apparent calm some chance event—a speech, a manifesto, a street riot, a sudden death—may bring the bolt from the lowering sky.

CHAPTER LXVII.

THE FRENCH ADVANCE AT VERDUN.

October 21–December 18, 1916.

Charles Mangin—Nivelle's Dispositions—Capture of Douaumont and Vaux—The December Battle—Losses and gains.

(*Map*, p. 306.)

It is a feature of great campaigns that certain places arrogate to themselves an importance which is not their due under the strict laws of strategy. They may have acquired this significance for military reasons, but they are apt to retain it when those reasons have gone. A spell hangs over them which sways unconsciously the minds of men. Once they may have been fortresses or sally-ports or ganglia of communications; but the fortress may be battered to earth, the sally-port blocked, and the routes of traffic diverted, and they will still possess an illogical but compelling power. The tides of battle may flow in far other channels, but neither side can cut itself loose from the old battle-ground. Ypres was such a case, and Verdun was another. To Germany the latter was in very truth a *damnosa hæreditas*. Her success had been so triumphantly advertised, that for very shame's sake she was fain to keep up the show of consummating it. When the Somme offensive was unleashed, she still continued her efforts to break the Froideterre–Fleury–Souville line of defence. She tried desperately on 11th July, and again on 1st August. On 21st July the Imperial Crown Prince told his troops: "The French count on our relinquishing our pressure on Verdun now that they have begun their attack on the Somme. We will show them that they are deceived." But the showing did not come. August saw Fleury firmly in French hands, and with the abortive attempt of 3rd September to advance from the Bois du Chapitre the enemy's strength seemed to be exhausted. By that date the grim Picardy struggle had drawn to it every spare battery and battalion on his Western front.

Germany would fain have let the Meuse uplands fall into the stagnation of the Vosges and the Aisne, but she was not permitted to cry out of the contest she had set. For France had taken up the gage in deadly earnest. For her, too, Verdun had become a test of prowess, a palladium not to be valued by common standards. It was not enough to have stood fast ; the time had come to advance. No triumphs on the Somme could wholly divert her eyes from that awful battlefield where she had won a glory not excelled by the victories of Austerlitz and Marengo. Verdun was the predestined soil on which, above all other spots, the enemy must reap the bitter harvest he had sown. In such a resolve there was something antique and splendid, some touch of that far-reaching imagination and poetry with which France has so often astonished the world. It was a strange land on which to set one's affections. The map might show the names of woods and villages and ravines, but these features were no longer there. From Fort Souville, looking north, the eye saw nothing but desert, pitted and hummocked as by the eruption of gigantic earthworms. No tree or masonry broke the desolation. The very gullies and glens, the quarries and the crests, had been beaten out of their old shapes. There were hundreds of thousands of men in the landscape, burrowing below that fretted soil, but there was no sign of them. Only the naked ridges of Douaumont, Froideterre, and Vaux were left of what had once been a pleasantly diversified countryside. But in every square yard of that landscape lay France's dead.

The fighting at Verdun from October 24 to December 18, 1916, may be regarded as a distinct and complete episode in the campaign. Beyond weakening the enemy's man-power and *moral* it had no direct bearing upon the main strategy. The terrain was self-contained, and the offensive—conducted as it was in wintry weather —did not spread to other areas. But as an episode it may well be regarded by the historian as one of the greatest in the war. It was a thing perfect alike in conception and execution, like some noble lyric interpolated in a great drama. At Verdun all that had been learned during the two years of war, and in especial the lessons of the Somme, were put into practice. The use of standing and creeping barrages, the new trench weapons, the art of consolidating ground, the *nettoyage* of captured trenches, the relation of missile to cold steel—in these and a thousand other problems the Allied view was brilliantly vindicated. The test was a hard one, for the enemy was prepared ; he was equal in numbers to the actual attacking force ; and the advance was a frontal one

made over a country as bald and exposed as the granite top of a mountain.

A new figure enters into the list of France's soldiers. Pétain had held the fort in the dark days of the spring of 1916, and Nivelle had borne the burden of the long summer battles. The latter still commanded the Second Army from the Argonne to Lorraine, but the coming attack was entrusted to a group of divisions under Charles Mangin. A man of fifty, Mangin was one of that great brotherhood of colonial generals which included Joffre, Galliéni, Lyautey, Gouraud, and Passaga. Born of a distinguished Lorraine family, which for generations had been eminent in the law and the army, he had served since his twenty-fourth year in Tonkin and in every part of northern Africa, and had been one of Marchand's companions in the great march from the Congo to the Nile. He had made himself the first authority on colonial campaigning, and had written a famous book on the fighting stuff which France possessed in her dark-skinned subjects. He was at home at the outbreak of the Great War, and was given command of the 8th Brigade in the Fifth Army, that army which took the shock of the first German onset at Charleroi. At the Marne he led the 5th Division in the 3rd Corps; he was heavily engaged at the First Battle of the Aisne; he was in the Artois fighting in the summer of 1915; and early in 1916 was in the Frise area south of the Somme. At the end of March 1916 he came with his division to Verdun, and led his men to the recapture of La Caillette Wood, and on 22nd May to the glorious and short-lived reconquest of Douaumont. In June he received a corps, the new 3rd Colonial Corps, and was given charge of the crucial sector on the right bank of the Meuse. In appearance he was a typical soldier of France, with his dark, stiff thatch of hair, his skin tanned by African suns, his iron jaw, his piercing black eyes that held both humour and fire. There was thought in his face as well as ardour and resolution, and he had that first requisite of great captains, imagination and an insight into the hearts of his troops. No man could speak more appositely that word which nerves the soldier to desperate ventures.

Since the land from Haudromont to Damloup was without cover, and was commanded by the enemy on the high ground at Douaumont and Fort Vaux, it was clear that a series of local actions would not avail. Any position won by these would be at once rendered untenable, and only a grand assault pushed forward to the main objectives would serve the French purpose. But since this would mean a frontal attack over difficult country, it demanded

for its success the most meticulous preparation. Mangin proposed to make the attempt with three divisions in line—three divisions which had already held the sector and knew every inch of it. These were the 38th Division under Guyot de Salins, composed of Zouaves, Colonial infantry, and those Moroccan and Algerian troops which had first won their spurs at Dixmude; and the 133rd and 74th Divisions of Passaga and Lardemelle, composed of chasseurs and infantry of the line from every district of France. One division was taken out of the line at the end of August, and the other two at the end of September, and withdrawn to a back area for training and rest. That training was carried out on a piece of ground modelled to reproduce the actual terrain, and in especial an exact counterpart of Fort Douaumont was constructed, so that every man of the attacking force should know the work assigned to him. Moreover, the training included practice in the new tactics of assault learned on the Somme, which had not yet been tried in the Verdun area. As regards *matériel*, there was a great increase in batteries and stores of shells, and much road-making and laying of light railways to ensure the rapid passage of munitions. Two divisions were left in the sector of assault, and for twenty days in the incessant rain of October these had a heavy time preparing trenches, dug-outs, headquarter posts, dressing-stations, and cover for the guns.

In October the enemy held the front between Avocourt and Les Eparges with fifteen divisions, of which seven were in first line. Between Haudromont and Damloup battery he had twenty-one battalions in front line, seven in support, and ten in reserve. After the battle the Germans, following their familiar practice, announced that they had long resolved to evacuate the positions they had lost, and were in the act of doing so when the French attacked. Captured documents told a different tale. One commander enlarged on the immense importance of Douaumont, and the necessity of safeguarding the German hold on it. An army order of Lochow, dated 18th September, enjoined the strengthening of the front and the preparation of reserve positions. As late as 23rd October we find the German commanders perfectly alive to the imminence of a French attack, and making plans to meet it, while urging their men to hold their ground at all costs. Mangin's intentions were well known to his opponents, and his attack had nothing of the nature of a surprise. They had no inclination to cede anything, least of all the vital Douaumont; and they believed that they were strong enough to beat him off, for on the ground they had over 200 batteries and equal numbers of men.

On Saturday, 21st October, the French guns opened, directed by kite balloons and airplanes, in the one brief spell of clear weather which October showed. Mangin had 289 field and mountain pieces, and 314 heavy guns. Methodically from hour to hour the enemy lines were pounded to atoms. The Verdun area, like the Somme, was losing its old nomenclature, and becoming a tangle of uncouth trench names. The enemy had been busy since midsummer, and had a vast number of new trenches—on the skirts of the woods of Chenois and Chapitre, and the neck of ridge which links the Souville and Douaumont uplands, and in and around the quarries of Haudromont. Every little ravine which cut the slopes had become a nest of dug-outs. On all these new works the French artillery played night and day, till the quarries and gullies were choked with rubble. On Sunday, the 22nd, a heavy shell landed in Douaumont fort, and there was the glare of a great fire. That same day a feint of the infantry obliged the enemy to reveal his new batteries, and many of them were marked down and shelled. That night a captured German pigeon message showed that things were in a bad way in the enemy's front line. Instant relief was begged for, and a hundred deserters came over, including an officer, who was rash enough to prophesy. "You will never retake Douaumont," he said, "any more than we shall take Verdun."

On the 23rd the three divisions of assault moved up to take their places in the assembly trenches, relieving the muddy and weary troops who for three weeks had been preparing the ground. The frontage was, roughly, seven kilometres, and the French position extended from the Wood of Haudromont just south of the quarries, skirting the Wood of Nawé, covering Fleury village, to the south edge of the Chemin Wood north of Laufée fort. It had been decided to conduct the operation in two stages. The first objective was a line formed by the Haudromont quarries, the ridge north of the Ravin de la Dame, the trench north of Thiaumont farm, the Fausse Côte battery, the north-east side of Chapitre Wood, the Viola trench in the Fumin Wood, and the Steinmetz trench before Damloup battery. After consolidating on this line the troops would advance to their final objective—the ridge north of the Couleuvre ravine, Douaumont village and fort, the north and east sides of the Fausse Côte ravine, the pond of Vaux, the Siegen trench west of the Fumin ravine, and Damloup battery. On the French left was the division of Guyot de Salins, directed upon Haudromont, Thiaumont, and Douaumont; in the centre Passaga's division, moving upon the Wood of La Caillette; and

on the right Lardemelle's division, with before it the Fumin, Chapitre, and Chenois woods, and the battery of Damloup. Between the divisions there was a noble emulation. "On your left," Passaga told his men, "you have the famous Africans. You are disputing for the honour of retaking Fort Douaumont. Let them know that they can count on us to support them, to open the door for them, and to share their glory."

By the morning of Tuesday, 24th October, while the guns still thundered, the clear weather had gone, and a thick autumn fog hung over the uplands. The valley of the Meuse was hidden, and even the next ridge a quarter of a mile away. The hour fixed for the assault was late, to enable the light to improve; and at ten minutes to twelve, when the troops went over the parapets, the haze was lifting, and the French airplanes were droning in the sky. Through the muddy fringes of the old woods and along the back of Froideterre went the three divisions, methodically, calmly, and with perfect certitude. It was like the ground round cavalry pickets, where every yard is churned and trodden. But here it was as if the trampling had been done by cohorts of mammoths and mastodons.

Success came at once. At Mangin's headquarters Joffre, Nivelle, and Pétain had arrived to watch the fortunes of the day, and presently through the raw October weather came telephone messages of a surprising and economical triumph. It was clear that the plan of the two stages must be forgone, for the three divisions were making one mouthful of the whole objective. Hordes of grey-clad prisoners came running back through the mist till, to the troops in reserve, it seemed that the men surrendering must far outnumber the attackers. At half-past two in the afternoon the wind rose and dispersed the haze, and from the observation posts near Souville the French infantry were seen moving up the slopes of Douaumont. At three came the news from the aircraft that they were in the fort. Before the dark fell every objective had been gained, and over 4,500 prisoners, including 130 officers, were on their way to the French rear.

Let us examine the progress of the day. On the extreme left the 11th Regiment attacked the Haudromont quarries, which had been turned into a gigantic fort. The place was encircled and mastered after a fierce struggle with grenades in the main quarry, and an enemy counter-attack beaten off. On their right the left wing of Guyot de Salins moved through the relics of the Wood of Nawé on the Ravin de la Dame as their first objective, and the

Couleuvre ravine as their second. These two gullies lay on the southern side of the depression into which the Douaumont–Bras road dipped after leaving the tableland. The 4th Regiment of Zouaves and the colonial *tirailleurs* had won their second objective by two o'clock, and patrols had pushed as far as the Helly ravine north of the Bras road. In the deeper dug-outs some of the enemy remained, ignorant of what was happening above ground. That night a French sergeant wandering among the shell-holes was taken prisoner by a party of Germans, and pushed into a subterranean chamber where dinner was being served. He asked where he was, and was told "The Ravin de la Dame." In return, he told them that Thiaumont and Douaumont had fallen, and had the satisfaction of taking back to his line 200 prisoners and six machine guns.

Guyot de Salins's right had a like success. A Moroccan battalion carried Thiaumont fort and farm, and a Zouave battalion coming after them flung themselves on Douaumont village. There now remained only Douaumont fort, a grim hump on the crest seen dimly through the fog. Its conquest had been reserved for two battalions of the Moroccans. One, under Commandant Modat, launched the assault, and carried the first objective. Then they halted to organize, and through them passed Commandant Croll's men, whose duty it was to turn the defence of the fort on right and left. Behind them came the spearhead, the battalion under Commandant Nicolay, which was destined for the actual storm. They were all picked men, and for weeks had been practised upon this very problem, till each man knew every yard of the objective like his own name. For a moment, but only for a moment, they lost direction in the mist. Then the brume opened, and disclosed their goal; and, after a second's halt, while each man gazed with reverence at a place so famous and so long in mind, they swept upon it through the German barrage, one of their own airplanes flying low above them. They scrambled over the fosse, carried the outer works, and bombed the remaining garrison out of the chambers. It was only three hours since they had left their parapets.

The centre division, under Passaga, had the longest road to travel. Advancing from Fleury, it had to cross the Bazil ravine, where ran the railway from Verdun to Vaux, and beyond that the Wood of La Caillette, honeycombed with trenches. It had a difficult starting-place, for at that point the enemy front formed a small salient, and accordingly the rate of advance of the different

units had to be nicely calculated. General Ancelin, commanding the left brigade, fell early in the day, and was replaced by Colonel Hutin, who had won fame in the Cameroons fighting. In fifty-eight minutes the division had attained its two objectives, and held a line from just east of Douaumont fort to the slopes north of the Fausse Côte ravine and west of Vaux pond. There, as the mist lightened, they watched with wild excitement the Colonials on their left carry Douaumont.

The fiercest fighting fell to the right division, under Lardemelle. The shoulder of hill crowned by Vaux fort was a difficult problem in itself, and it had been defended by the enemy with a perfect spider's web of trenches. The terrain was bounded on the left by the Souville–Vaux road descending the Fontaines ravine, and on the right by the Damloup battery on the steep overhanging the Woëvre. The intervening space was occupied with the debris of three woods and a number of little ravines. The Germans had constructed a strong front line from just north of Souville to the La Gayette ridge above Damloup, including the trenches named Moltke, Clausewitz, Mudra, Steinmetz, and Werder. Behind was an intermediate line with as points in it the work called Petit Depôt and the battery of Damloup. The second line, a kilometre or more behind the front line, ran from the place where the Fontaines ravine begins to open into the Vaux valley, and included the trenches of Hanau, Siegen, de Saales, and Damloup village. Lardemelle's men were troops of the line and chasseurs, in large part contingents brought from Dauphiné and Savoy. Their first rush took them into most of the first objective ; but Clausewitz trench held out till three o'clock. The intermediate line followed, but it was eight o'clock before it was all captured, the Petit Depôt being the last point to fall. Early in the day Damloup battery had been brilliantly carried by the 30th Regiment. But the second line was not touched, and all through the night there was fierce fighting, where the Savoyards of the 230th Regiment were engaged in the Wood of Fumin and the east side of the Fontaines ravine. In such a war as this night brought no peace to either side, and through the mud and the darkness the battle continued. The combat had now centred itself on the Vaux ridge. On the morning of Wednesday, the 25th, the last survivors of the garrison of Douaumont surrendered ; and next day there were heavy German counter-attacks against the fort, which were broken up by the French fire. There the line remained firm, while on the Vaux ridge it was creeping inexorably round

the ruins which in June the gallantry of Raynal could not save from German hands.

The great struggle was for the German second line — the trenches Gotha, Siegen, and de Saales, and Damloup village ; for if these fell the fort of Vaux must go. On the 26th they were bitterly contested, and that day a French patrol got close to the south and east angles of the fort itself. Another reconnaissance descended the northern slope of the Fumin Wood, and found touch with Passaga's right at Vaux pond. The weather had become foul again, and it was clear that a continued attack on the fort by Lardemelle would be too high a trial. Accordingly the troops were slightly retired, and the guns opened in a new and furious bombardment of the bald hill-top. On the 28th General Andlauer's 9th Division relieved Lardemelle, and Arlabosse relieved Passaga.

On the morning of Thursday, 2nd November, the French observers reported that part of the fort, where the explosions had been most frequent, was in process of evacuation by the enemy. When night fell a company of the 118th Regiment went forward to reconnoitre the ground beyond the fort, while a company of the 298th—Raynal's old regiment—were told off to enter the ruins. They had some difficulty in finding a way in, so wholesale had been the destructive work of the French guns ; but when they effected an entrance, they found that the garrison had not stayed upon the order of their going. Large quantities of military supplies, not to speak of a recent army order enjoining the strengthening of the defence, gave the lie to the German tale that the evacuation had been decided on long before, and that the French had been forcing an open door. Vaux fort had been claimed by the enemy as far back as 9th March, and had finally fallen on 7th June. Its recapture forced the Germans in this section off the heights into the marshy plain, and, combined with the retaking of Douaumont, gave the French the vantage in observation.

Next day, Friday, 3rd November, Andlauer's division pushed beyond Vaux fort to the edge of the plateau overhanging Vaux glen. On the Saturday they cleared the Germans off the northern slopes, crossing at one point the Vaux–Damloup road ; but the enemy still held the Hardaumont ridge in strength. Later in the day Arlabosse's division pressed in from the Fumin Wood on the west side of the hamlet, and Andlauer's men on the eastern side carried their line well up the Hardaumont slopes. Vaux village was now in French hands. At the same time, on the right,

the village of Damloup was won back. In ten days Mangin had wiped out the German gains during eight months of battle. The French line now stood as it had stood on February 26, 1916, the sixth day of the Crown Prince's offensive. At a cost of under 6,000 casualties he had taken more than that number of German prisoners, many guns, and vast quantities of supplies, and had put out of action the equivalent of two enemy divisions.

Before the first phase was concluded Nivelle had made his plan for a second and bolder effort. The great October attack had not been pushed to the limits of the French strength. The troops had been deliberately halted, in accordance with Nivelle's cautious plan, when they might have gone farther. The French Command took an artistic pride in their actions, rounding off neatly their set objectives, but not straggling beyond them; moreover, they desired to fight economically, and operations prolonged at random are costly. But the situation after the fall of Douaumont and Vaux had certain drawbacks. The enemy had lost his principal observation posts, but he had others nearly as good, such as Hill 342, on the Côte du Poivre, and Hill 378, between Louvemont and the farm of Chambrettes. The Louvemont plateau too, with its hollows and deep-cut ravines, gave him good gun positions, and so long as he held it the access to Douaumont was meagre and difficult. To complete the October victories, it was necessary to push the Germans back from the high ground between Louvemont and Bezonvaux.

The enemy line after the fall of Douaumont lay from the Meuse, just south of Vacherauville, and covering that village, along the south side of the crest of the Côte du Poivre; through the Wood of Haudromont on the north side of the glen where ran the Bras–Douaumont road; just north of Douaumont fort and village, and along the south slopes of the Wood of Hardaumont, above Vaux, to the flats of the Woëvre. It was a strong line, and the Germans, alarmed by the events of October, had greatly strengthened it. The front bristled with redoubts, many new trenches had been dug, and advantage had been taken of the ravines to form strong points to take any advance in flank. The task of the attackers was harder than in October. Then, once the first-line crust had been broken, the affair was to a large extent over, and the troops promenaded to victory; now there was a series of crusts, each one of which must be pierced by stern fighting. The Germans had on the ten kilometres of front five divisions. They held

their first line with fifteen battalions—between 8,000 and 9,000 bayonets; they had the same number in immediate reserve, and the rest in quarters within easy call. Four other divisions were at hand in support.

Mangin had four divisions of attack—those of Passaga and Guyot de Salins, which had come back out of the line for rest at the end of October; the 37th of Garnier du Plessis, which had been one of those to bear the brunt of the spring battles of Verdun; and the 126th of Muteau, which was new to the terrain. As before the earlier operations, all were trained upon a model of the ground they were destined to win. Nothing was left to chance; every detail was scrutinized, and every contingency foreseen. The troops, already a *corps d'élite*, were strung to the highest pitch of enthusiasm by memories of past successes, and the consciousness that France waited with hushed breath on the issue of the new adventure. Their commanders knew how to speak the decisive word. "From the heights of Hardaumont," said Passaga, "the enemy still sees a corner of that famous place where he thought to decide the fate of our country and of civilization. To you has been given the honour of winning that height. . . . You will push your bayonets well beyond it. You will add to the glory of your flag by the lustre of another unforgettable day." Muteau told his troops, still unentered in the Verdun contest: "You will justify the honour that has been done you. The enemy still clings to the Côte du Poivre, whence he insults Verdun with his greedy eyes. You will hurl him off it. *A l'heure dite, haut les cœurs! Et en avant pour notre chère France!*"

The beginning of December saw ill weather—high winds, rains, and flurries of snow. The artillery preparation, due to start on the 2nd, had to be postponed for a week. But on the 11th the air was clear, though the skies were still grey and threatening. Winter warfare can only be conducted in the pauses of storms, and a commander must snatch any interval of calm. At dawn on that day the French airplanes were humming over the plateau, and the guns opened. It was a moment most critical and dramatic in the history of the war. Germany was launching her peace proposals, and next day the Imperial Chancellor told the world that his country had given proof of her indestructible power by gaining victories over adversaries superior in numbers, and that her unshakable line still resisted the incessant attacks of her foes. Some answer was needed, and France was preparing one more eloquent than any diplomatic note. A change, too, had come

about in the French High Command. Nivelle, the commander of the Second Army, had been nominated Commander-in-Chief in the West, and this was his last fight before he took up his new duties. Into it he had put every atom of his vigorous energies. He told the Cabinet in Paris of his plans, and forecast with amazing accuracy the extent of his successes. "Prepare," he said, "to receive good news. Before the evening of December 15th I will send you a telegram giving details of this and that success." No operation of war was ever more dramatically staged, and it is a proof of the complete confidence of Nivelle in his troops that he should have thus ventured to tempt fate and boldly prophesy.

The grand bombardment began on the 11th, but ceased during the afternoon owing to bad weather. During the 12th, 13th, and 14th it continued—a far more difficult operation than that of October. The short winter days, the fog, and the rain made aerial observation uncertain, and on the air depends the virtue of the guns. The target, too, was less easy than in October, for the enemy's front was cunningly grooved and recessed in the maze of ravines and little glens. The French were suffering also from what had been the greatest obstacle to the British in the winter's fighting on the Somme—the necessity of bringing up ammunition across an old battlefield. All the ground between Souville and Douaumont had been fought over, and though miles of new roads and light railways had been constructed, the transport of heavy shells was an arduous labour. Nevertheless, from the 11th onward, the strong points on the German front were scientifically blotted out—the Hardaumont Wood, and the ruined villages of Vacherauville, Louvemont, and Bezonvaux, now turned into underground fortresses. The French barrage cut off all communication, and for three days the German defence, cowering in dug-outs under a ceaseless tornado, went hungry. Deserters dribbled across the line—broken men who fled from the wrath to come.

Friday, the 15th, dawned grey and chilly, with snow showers and a lowering sky, but without the baffling fog. The French divisions of attack crossed their parapets at ten in the morning. On the left Muteau's division had for its main objective the hill called 342 on the Côte du Poivre ; next to it Guyot de Salins struck at Louvemont ; on his right Garnier du Plessis had the area between Chambrettes farm and Bezonvaux ; while Passaga, on his right flank, aimed at the fortressed labyrinth which was once the Wood of Hardaumont. The task of the divisions varied much in difficulty. The whole movement was a swing forward of the right

wing pivoting on the Côte du Poivre; so that while Muteau on the left had less than a mile, though a difficult mile, to cover, the troops on the right had a two-mile advance before them.

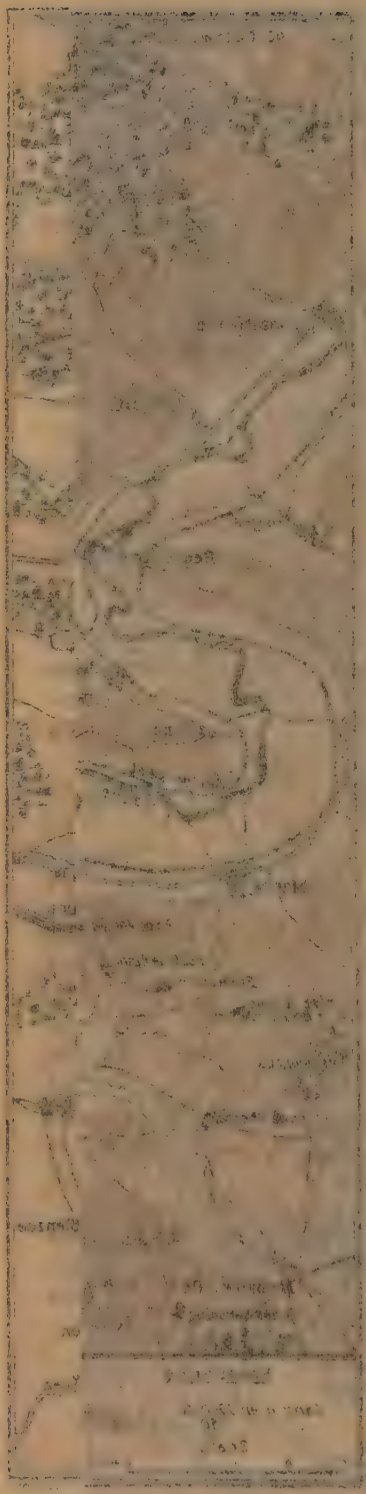
Muteau had an instant success. His men, infantry of the line, were for the most part reservists with thirty years behind them. On the extreme left Woillemont's brigade attacked Vacherauville and the crest of the Côte du Poivre. At seven minutes past ten they had won the crest, and five minutes after the 112th Regiment was in the village. Twenty minutes later the crowning position of Hill 342 was carried, and the intricate German defences, elaborated during eight weeks, had passed into other hands, together with 1,200 prisoners. That fierce half-hour was one of the most brilliant strokes of the campaign. Nothing stopped the fury of the assault, not uncut wire or machine guns in pockets or unforeseen strongholds; that thunderous charge swept aside all hindrances like stubble. Vacherauville had been made a strong place, but its strength was futile against the swift encircling tactics of the French and their tempestuous surge inwards. On Muteau's right the brigade under Steinmetz which took Hill 342 evoked the admiration of Guyot de Salins's proud Colonials, who were stern judges of an assault. "Tell your commander, with our compliments," so ran the message, "that for linesmen that was pretty well done."

East of Muteau the Moroccan brigade of the Colonials attacked from the Wood of Haudromont against Louvemont village, which lay in the slight dip of the plateau where ran the highway from Vacherauville to Ornes. There Nicolay's battalion, the victors of Douaumont, had a desperate struggle in the first-line trenches, called Prague and Pomerania; and there fell Nicolay himself, shot through the forehead by a sniper who picked out the tall figure of the commandant. His death maddened his followers, and Louvemont, encircled on three sides, speedily fell. The right of the division was no less successful. In the ravine of Helly the Zouaves repeated their October exploit in the Ravin de la Dame. In three-quarters of an hour they were on the crest of Hill 378—after Douaumont the highest point of the neighbourhood; and at twenty minutes past one the farm of Les Chambrettes was in their hands.

On their right the division of Garnier du Plessis had a long and stubborn task. Its first difficulty was with the work called the Camp of Attila, at the head of the Helly ravine, which was stubbornly defended by a Grenadier battalion from Posen, whose

THE FRENCH ADVANCE AT VERDUN.

(*Facing p. 306.*)



officers themselves served the machine guns, and whose colonel fought most gallantly to the end. One part of the division was able to push on almost to the edge of the Wood of Caurières, where they were in touch with the Zouaves in Les Chambrettes. But the rest, after brilliantly carrying the enemy's first line, were held up in the second by the trenches called Weimar and Chemnitz, which lined the crest on the west side of the Hassoule ravine, which descends to Bezonvaux glen. This position also checked the advance of Passaga, who in the morning had brilliantly carried the trenches and ravines in the Wood of Hardaumont. When the December dark fell the French line was as follows :—From Vacherauville to Louvemont the whole Côte du Poivre was in their hands, except a pocket on the crest which was reduced during the night. East of Louvemont they held the higher ground as far as Les Chambrettes farm, from which, owing to the enemy bombardment, they had slightly withdrawn. Thence the front curved sharply back, running through the woods of La Vauche and Hardaumont, and reaching the edge of the uplands just south of the little fort of Bezonvaux.

Next day, 16th December, it was the task of du Plessis's division to make good the Weimar and Chemnitz trenches. Till this happened, Passaga on the right was held, and the Zouaves of de Salins at Les Chambrettes were awkwardly enfiladed. Indeed the latter formed a sharp salient, and all night long had to struggle against attacks from the Wood of Caurières. Little could be done in the darkness, for the moon was in its last quarter, and the blasts of snow made the obscurity profound. At the first light the advance began. Two battalions of Passaga's right brigade forced their way into Bezonvaux village, while a battalion on his left took in flank the Deux-Ponts trench, which was a continuation of the more famous Weimar. Large numbers of prisoners were taken; but the French had no time to look after them, and their multitude of captives was almost their undoing. For some six hundred, wandering back without an escort, and seeing that the attacking force at this point was a mere handful, recovered their arms, and, skulking in trenches and in shell-holes, opened fire from the back. The chasseurs were between two foes, and disaster might have followed but for the fact that the Zouaves on the left were busy executing a similar flanking movement, and had carried the ridge in the rear of the Weimar trench. They saw what was happening farther east, and dispatched a company to the aid of the hard-pressed chasseurs. The Weimar defence was now hope-

lessly turned, and du Plessis's men swept over the debateable ground, through the Wood of Caurières, and carried the line to the scarp of the plateau. The French front now lay where it had been on 24th February, the fourth day of the great battle.

The German counter-attacks came fast, and their main object was the little salient at Les Chambrettes. All the afternoon of the 16th they kept up a continuous bombardment on de Salins's right, which for two days went through the extreme of human misery. To win ground is easy compared with the task of holding it—holding it through the long winter nights in mud and snow and bitter cold, with no dug-outs, no hot food, no shelter, no rest from an overpowering fatigue. For six days a Zouave battalion, under Lieutenant-Colonel Richard, held the Les Chambrettes sector. On the 17th the Germans counter-attacked, and managed to recover the ruins of the farm, the last point from which observation was possible towards Douaumont and the Chauffour Wood. The Zouaves refused to be relieved till they had won it back. On Monday, the 18th, at three o'clock in the afternoon, win it back they did, and such an attack has rarely been witnessed by mortal eyes. Every man was a muddy ghost, weary to death, and chilled to the bone. Long ago, in Marlborough's wars, the cry of "*En avant les gants glacés!*" had attended the charge of the Maison du Roi. Now it was "*En avant les pieds gelés!*" that the leader shouted. The frozen feet did not fail him. Men crawled on their knees, men used rifles as crutches; but, limping and stumbling, they swarmed over Les Chambrettes and made it theirs.

The action fought between 15th and 18th December was, considering its short duration, perhaps the most remarkable Allied success since the campaign opened in the West. The prisoners taken numbered 11,387, including 284 officers; 115 guns were captured or destroyed; 44 trench mortars, 107 machine guns, and much other material were taken; four villages, five forts, many redoubts, and innumerable trenches were occupied; and the better part of six enemy divisions was destroyed. The French losses for the first day were in the neighbourhood of 1,500! In the later days the total mounted higher, thereby supporting Nivelle's point: for he had argued that it was only when the line grew stationary that losses came, and that an attack kept up continuously must be economical—a view which, as we shall see, was to play an important part in the next stage of French strategy. Moreover, it was no sudden gift from fortune, but a result foreseen and planned

—a triumph of generalship and calculation as well as of fighting prowess. The event came at an auspicious moment. It was for Nivelle a spectacular farewell to his old army, and an eloquent message to his countrymen on his assumption of the highest command. Above all, it was France's reply to Germany's manœuvring for a false peace. "To her hypocritical overtures," Mangin told his men, "you have answered with the cannon mouth and the bayonet point. You have been the true ambassadors of the Republic. You have done well by your country."

CHAPTER LXVIII.

THE POSITION AT SEA AND IN THE AIR.

August 19–*November* 28, 1916.

The German High Sea Fleet—The Dover Patrol—Germany's Submarine Successes—The "Submarine Cruiser"—British Methods of Defence—Jellicoe becomes First Sea Lord—The Year's Work in the Air—Controversy as to Administration of British Air Force—The Zeppelin Raids on Britain—The first Raiding Airplane.

THE second half of the year 1916 brought no great sea battle to break the monotony of the vigil of the British Navy. The events which led to the Battle of Jutland were not repeated. Movements there were both in the North Sea and the Baltic, but none was followed by an engagement of capital ships. The autumn was indeed a period of high significance in naval warfare, but the struggle was waged below the surface. The face of the northern waters saw no encounter which deserved the name of a serious battle.

For a moment in August there was hope of better things. On Saturday, the 19th, the German High Sea Fleet came out, preceded by a large number of scouting craft and accompanied by Zeppelins. They found the British forces in strength, and deemed it wiser to alter course and return to port. In searching for the enemy we lost two light cruisers by submarine attack—the *Nottingham* * (Captain C. B. Miller) and the *Falmouth* † (Captain John D. Edwards)—but happily the loss of life was small. One German submarine was destroyed, and another rammed and damaged. That same day the British submarine E23 attacked a German battleship of the *Nassau* class, and hit her with two torpedoes. The enemy vessel was last seen, in a

* The *Nottingham* had a displacement of 5,400 tons and 25 knots. She had been in the Battles of the Dogger Bank and Jutland.

† The *Falmouth*, which was also at the Battle of Jutland, had 5,250 tons and 25 knots.

precarious condition, being escorted back to harbour by destroyers.

There was no further incident till the close of October, when destroyers of the German flotilla, which had its base at Zeebrugge, placed a bold exploit to their credit. The safety of the mighty Channel ferry, which had carried millions of our troops safely backward and forward between France and England, had become almost an article of faith with the British people. In spite of drifting mines and submarine activity our lines of communication had remained untouched, and Sir Reginald Bacon, the admiral commanding the Dover patrols, was able to report in his dispatch of 27th July 1916 that not a single life had been lost in the vast transport operations of two years. The night of Thursday, 26th October, was moonless and stormy, and, under cover of the weather, ten German destroyers slipped out of Zeebrugge and made their way down Channel. Air reconnaissance had given them the exact location of our minefields and our main cross-Channel route. Creeping along inshore in the dark, they managed to elude the vigilance of the British patrols. They fell in with an empty transport, *The Queen*, which they promptly torpedoed. The vessel kept afloat for six hours, and all her crew were saved. Six of our drifters were also sunk, and then British destroyers came on the scene. One of them, the *Flirt*,* was surprised at close quarters by the enemy and sunk, while another, the *Nubian*,† was torpedoed while attacking the invaders, and went aground, her tow having parted in the heavy weather. The enemy made off without apparently suffering any losses from our gun or torpedo fire ; but there was evidence that two of his destroyers afterwards struck mines and perished. Such were the bare facts of an incident which, for the moment, agitated public opinion and increased the uneasiness as to our naval position which the growth of submarine activity had already engendered. In itself it was a small affair—a bold enterprise which had every chance in its favour, for the confusion and darkness made its success almost certain. The wonder was not that it happened, but that it had not happened before. Major Moraht and others had long been pointing out the importance of the Channel ferry for Britain, and it would have been little short of miraculous if nothing had ever occurred to threaten that line of communication. The Ger-

* The *Flirt* belonged to "C" class, and had 380 tons and 30 knots.

† The *Nubian* was of the "F" group, and had 985 tons and 33 knots. Both had been engaged in the operations off the Belgian coast under Rear-Admiral Hood in the autumn of 1914.

man adventure was to be expected so long as the nest of pirates at Zeebrugge was not smoked out or hermetically sealed up, and such true preventive measures were both difficult and dangerous so long as the main German Fleet was not out of action.

Three more incidents of what may be called open fighting fell to be recorded before the close of the year. On the night of 1st November the *Oldambt*, a Dutch steamer, was captured by German destroyers near the North Hinder Lightship, a prize crew was put on board, and the vessel was making for Zeebrugge. Early next morning she was overtaken by British destroyers, and the prize crew made prisoners. Five German destroyers which came up as escort were engaged and put to flight. On 7th November a British submarine, under Commander Noel Laurence, fell in with a German squadron off the coast of Jutland, and hit two battleships of the *Kaiser* class. Three days later German torpedo craft of the latest and largest type, under cover of fog, attempted a raid on the entrance to the Gulf of Finland. They were engaged by Russian destroyers, and driven off in confusion, losing from six to nine vessels.

The main German successes during these months were won against liners and hospital ships. With regard to the latter Germany followed her familiar method. She attacked vessels which bore conspicuously the mark of their non-belligerent mission, attacked them often in broad daylight, and then, to justify herself, invented the legend that they were laden with ammunition and war material.* On 21st November there was a flagrant instance in the torpedoing of the *Britannic* in the Zea Channel off the south-east point of Attica. The *Britannic*, which in gross tonnage was the largest British ship afloat, was carrying over 1,000 wounded soldiers from Salonika, most of whom were saved, the total death-roll being only about fifty. The outrage took place in the clear morning light, when the character of the great vessel was apparent to the most purblind submarine commander. On 6th November the P. and O. liner *Arabia*, a sister ship to the *India* and the *Persia*, which had been previously destroyed, was torpedoed without warning in the Mediterranean, all the passengers and the majority of the crew being saved.

Since the war began the most striking fact in naval warfare had been the development of the range of action of the submarine. At first it was believed in Britain that an enemy submarine could

* The military purpose was, of course, to compel Britain to draw upon her scanty supply of destroyers to act as escorts to such vessels.

do little more than reach the British coast, and the torpedoing of the *Pathfinder* on 5th September and of the three *Cressys* off the Hook of Holland on September 22, 1914, came as an unpleasant surprise to popular opinion. In December of that year Tirpitz himself announced that the larger under-water boats could remain out for as much as fourteen days at a time. Two months later the U boats were in the Irish Channel, and in May 1915 they were in the Mediterranean. There, to be sure, they were assisted by depots *en route*, and the full extent of a submarine's range was not understood till, in July 1916, the *Deutschland* reached the American coast. This exploit so heartened Germany that she announced a long-range blockade of Britain, and promised in October to begin operations. The Allied Governments protested to neutral states against the extension to submarines of the ordinary rule of international law which permits a warship to enjoy for twenty-four hours the hospitality of foreign territorial waters. They urged that any belligerent submarine entering a neutral port should be detained there, on the ground that such vessels, being submersible, could not be properly identified at sea, and must escape the normal control and observation of other types of warships.

On Saturday, 7th October, the German U53 (Captain Rose)* arrived at Newport, Rhode Island. She did not take in supplies, but she received certain information, and presently departed. During the next two days she sank by torpedo or gun-fire eight vessels in the vicinity of the Nantucket Lightship, including one Dutch and one Norwegian steamer. There was no life lost, owing to the prompt appearance of American destroyers. The performance created something like a panic in American shipping circles, and for a day or two outgoing ships were detained. But it was soon obvious that talk of a blockade of the American coast would awaken a very ugly temper in the United States, and could not be defended by the wildest stretch of the rules of international law. Submarines which took at least a month coming and going from German waters could not institute any effective blockade without illegal assistance on the American side, and the Government of Washington was determined that the temptation should not arise. Accordingly the performance of U53 remained unique. The *Deutschland* arrived on its second voyage on 1st November,

* This was perhaps the most advertised of all German submarines, and though eagerly pursued was never destroyed by the Allies. It was, however, crippled for good by an American subchaser about two months before the end of the war.

and the occasional transit of other submarines continued; but the Nantucket doings were not repeated, and the talk of long-range blockade was suddenly dropped.*

But in the Eastern Atlantic and the Mediterranean, and in all the waters adjacent to the British and German coasts, the autumn saw a determined revival of Germany's submarine campaign. The comparative immunity which had endured throughout the summer was violently broken, and the tale of Allied and neutral losses quickly mounted to a dangerous figure. Germany was operating now with the large boats laid down in the spring of 1915—boats with a radius of 12,000 miles, carrying deck guns with a range of 6,000 yards, with strong upper works capable of resisting hits by six-pounders, and with a surface speed of twenty-five knots, and a submerged speed of twelve. In the last six months of 1916 she completed not less than eighty new craft. Her promise to President Wilson of May 1916 was utterly disregarded. Vessels were torpedoed without warning, and without provision being made for the safety of the passengers. The *Marina*, for example, which was destroyed off the Irish coast at the end of October with considerable loss of life, had many Americans on board; but Berlin gambled on the preoccupation of the American people with the Presidential election. Swedish, Danish, and Dutch vessels suffered heavily, and the Norwegian merchant navy was a special target owing to Norway's refusal to permit German submarines inside her territorial waters. The U-boats became insolent in their daring, and in the beginning of December one of them shelled the town of Funchal, Madeira, in broad daylight, and sank several ships in her harbour. The barbarity of the enemy grew with his successes. The *Westminster* was torpedoed without warning on 14th December, and sunk in five minutes. As the crew tried to escape, the submarine shelled them at 3,000 yards range, sinking one of the boats, and killing the master and chief engineer. By the end of the year Germany claimed that the Allied tonnage was disappearing from the sea at the rate of 10,000 tons a day; and though the figure was considerably overstated, yet beyond doubt a maritime situation had arisen, the gravest which had yet faced the Allies since the beginning of the war.

The reason of Germany's success was not far to seek. So long

* The ocean-cruiser type of submarine had a crew of 70 and a displacement approaching 3,000 tons. But they were slow to submerge and difficult to handle, and on the whole played a very small part in the war.

as the U-boats confined themselves to the Narrow Seas we could by nets and other devices take heavy toll of them, and nullify their efforts. But all our normal defensive measures were idle when they extended their range and operated in the open waters of the Atlantic. A new problem had arisen, to be met by new methods. Germany was attempting to meet the British blockade by a counter-blockade—to cripple the sea-borne trade which brought food to the people of Britain and munitions of war to all the Allies. Our available merchant tonnage was shrinking daily, and, with labour already taxed to its utmost, it looked as if it might be difficult to replace the wastage. An extravagant rise in prices, a genuine scarcity of food, even the crippling of some vital section of the Allied munitionment, were possibilities that now loomed not too remotely on the horizon.

To cope with the German campaign there seemed at the moment to be three possible plans—two practicable, but inadequate; one summary and final, but hard to achieve. Of a fourth—to make the sea no place for submarines—the possibility was not yet envisaged. The first was to arm all merchantmen. This would not prevent torpedoing, but it would make destruction by bombs or deck-guns more difficult, and since no submarine could carry a large stock of torpedoes, the power of mischief of the under-water boat would be thereby limited. Such arming of merchantmen had the drawback that it would absorb a large number of guns for which there was other and urgent use, or in the alternative would compel munition factories to switch off from their normal work to ensure their production. It would also induce the Germans to revive wholesale their practice of sinking without warning. The second plan was to revive an old fashion, and make all merchantmen sail in convoy. This method was unpopular among shipowners because of its inconvenience and delay, and it had the further objection that it would give the enemy submarines an easy target, assuming that they eluded the vigilance of the escorting warships. Moreover, the type of fast lighter craft required for escort could only be provided by a large amount of new construction, or by withdrawing that type from its duties with the main battle squadrons. Both of the plans were confessed to be palliatives rather than cures, and both made further demands upon the already severely taxed reserve of British labour.

The one final policy against submarines was to carry our mine-fields up to the edge of the German harbours, and to pen the enemy within his own bases. But clearly this aggressive cam-

paign was most hazardous so long as the main German Fleet remained in being. It would be impossible, while the enemy's High Sea Fleet was still intact, to utilize a large part of our fleet in mining operations in his home waters without running the risk of a division of strength and a sudden disaster. The true remedy for the submarine menace was a naval victory which would destroy the better part of the capital ships. This did not mean that Sir John Jellicoe was forthwith to run his head against the defences of Wilhelmshaven, and risk everything in an attempt to bring the enemy to action; but it did mean that the last word, as always, lay with the main fleets, and that to rest on our laurels because the German High Sea Fleet was more or less immobilized was to repose upon a false security. The truth was that our command of the sea was far from absolute. We had not neutralized the enemy's fleet so long as it remained above water, and the development of submarine warfare had impaired the safety of our ocean-borne trade. We possessed a conditional superiority, but we could not make it actual and reap the fruits of it till we had won a decisive sea battle. This truth was obscured during the autumn of 1916 by some unfortunate publications of Mr. Winston Churchill, who, having returned from the front, and being without official responsibility, was free to indulge in comments on the situation. "The primary and dominant fact," he wrote, "is that from its base in Scottish waters the British Fleet delivers a continuous attack upon the vital necessities of the enemy, whereas the enemy, from his home bases, produces no corresponding effect upon us." He urged the country to rest satisfied with this "silent attack," and criticized the Battle of Jutland as an "audacious but unnecessary effort" to bring the enemy to action. No necessity of war, he argued, obliged us to accept the risk of fighting at a distance from our bases and in enemy waters. Apart from the fact that Mr. Churchill's view was in conflict with principles that had always governed our sea policy, his conclusion was wholly unwarranted by the facts. The German Fleet, by the mere fact that it existed intact, did "exercise a continuous attack upon our vital necessities." It crippled our efforts to overcome the very real submarine menace. A successful general action, so far from being a luxury and a trimming, was the chief demand of the moment, for only by the shattering of Scheer could the U-boats be corralled, blinded, and effectively checkmated.

The anxiety of the nation was presently reflected in certain important changes made in the high naval commands. For some time it had been urged that the post of First Sea Lord was the most

vital in the Navy, and that the man who held it should be one who had large experience of actual service under modern conditions. For twenty-eight months Sir John Jellicoe had been continuously at sea. He had been aforetime a successful Admiralty official, and understood headquarters procedure; but, above all, he had learned at first hand the problems of the hour. It is desirable during any campaign that the man with first-hand knowledge of realities should be given the directing power at home. The main duty was to cope with the enemy submarine, and to solve that conundrum needed the fullest experience of the enemy's methods. The policy had been followed when Sir William Robertson was brought back from France as Chief of the Imperial General Staff, and the same course was now taken with the Commander-in-Chief at sea. On 4th December Sir John Jellicoe was gazetted First Sea Lord in place of Sir Henry Jackson, while Sir David Beatty assumed command of the Grand Fleet.

The new appointments were welcomed by the nation, and did something to appease the critics. The crying needs of the moment were that our naval policy should be considered not as a thing by itself, but as a part of the whole strategic plan of the Allies, and that the administration at headquarters should be in the closest touch with the requirements of the fighting line. Sir John Jellicoe was not only a great sea-captain, but a trained administrator and a man of statesmanlike width and foresight, and he brought to his new office an unequalled experience of active service. Moreover, the mere change of duties was in itself desirable, for an unrelieved vigil of twenty-eight months must tell upon the strongest constitution and the stoutest nerve. In all human enterprises some readjustment of *personnel* is periodically necessary, if only to ensure that variation of tasks which is the best rest and refreshment to men of action. The new Commander-in-Chief was the man to whom fate had granted the widest experience of actual fighting. In two and a half years Sir John Jellicoe had been no more than two and a half hours within range of the enemy. Sir David Beatty had had better fortune, for he had been at the Battle of the Bight of Heligoland, at the battle of January 24, 1915, and had been in action through the whole of the Battle of Jutland. At the age of forty-six he succeeded to the highest fighting command in the British Navy, and those who believed that there was no final settlement of our sea difficulties except in a decisive victory over the main enemy fleet rejoiced that in Sir David Beatty the spirit of the offensive was incarnate.

The summer and autumn of 1916 saw no such spectacular revival of German aeronautics as marked the close of 1915. The Fokker—for some months a defence so formidable that the Allied air offensive came almost to a standstill—had found its level, and though Germany struggled hard to create new types, she did not again steal a march upon the Allied construction. Moreover, the opening of the Somme offensive saw an immense advance in the tactical use of airplanes by the Allies, an advance marked by such boldness and ingenuity that the question of aerial supremacy seemed to be clearly decided. The French and British airmen had beyond doubt won the initiative. This was recognized by the enemy, and captured letters were full of complaints of the inadequacy of the German reply. The Battle of the Somme in its later stages showed, indeed, something of the old see-saw, and there came moments when the German airmen recovered their nerve and made a stout defence. The popular phrase, the "mastery of the air," was in those days apt to be misused. There were weeks when the Allies' total of loss seemed to be higher than that of their adversaries, and pessimists complained that our mastery had gone. Mastery in the absolute sense never existed. The Allied squadrons still ventured much when they crossed the enemy lines, and they paid a price, sometimes a heavy price, for their successes. But they maintained continuously the offensive. Daily they did their work of destruction and reconnaissance far inside the enemy territory, while the few German machines that crossed our lines came at night, and at a great elevation. Hourly throughout the battles they gave to the work of the infantry a tactical support to which the enemy could show no parallel. If the Allied losses had been consistently higher than the Germans' the superiority would still have been ours, for we achieved our purpose. We hampered the enemy's reserves, destroyed his depots, reconnoitred every acre of his hinterland, and shattered his peace of mind. For such results no price could have been too high, for our air work was the foundation of every infantry advance. As a matter of sober fact, the price was not high ; it was less than Germany paid for her inadequate defence.

During the later Verdun battles and the great offensive on the Somme, the four main aerial activities were maintained. Our airplanes did long-distance reconnoitring work, they "spotted" for the guns, they bombed important enemy centres, and they fought and destroyed enemy machines. The daily communiqués recorded the destruction of enemy dumps and depots and railway

junctions, and a long series of brilliant conflicts in the air, where often a German squadron was broken up and put to flight by a single Allied plane. To a watcher of these battles the signs of our superiority were manifest. Constantly at night a great glare behind the lines marked where some German ammunition store had gone up in flames. The orderly file of Allied kite balloons glittered daily in the sun; but the German "sausages" were few, and often a wisp of fire in the heavens showed that another had fallen victim to an Allied airman. A German plane was as rare a sight a mile within our lines as a swallow in November, but the eternal crack of anti-aircraft guns from the German side told of the persistency of the Allied inroads.

The most interesting development brought about by the Somme action was that of "contact patrols." The machines used were of the slowest type, and it was their business to accompany an infantry advance and report progress. In the intricate trench fighting of the modern battle nothing was harder than to locate the position at any one moment of the advancing battalions. Flares might not be observed in the smoke and dust; dispatch runners might fail to get through the barrage; the supply of pigeons might give out or the birds be killed *en route*—and the general behind might be unable in consequence to give orders to the guns. With the system of "creeping barrages" it was vital that the command should be fully informed from time to time of the exact situation of the infantry attack. The airman, flying low over the trenches, could detect the whereabouts of his own troops and report accordingly. Again and again during the Somme, when the mist of battle and ill weather had swallowed up the advance, airplanes brought half-hourly accurate and most vital intelligence. A check could in this way be made known, and the guns turned on to break up an obstacle; while an advance swifter than the time-table could be saved from the risk of its own barrage. Curiously enough, except for rifle and machine-gun fire from the German trenches, these flights were not so desperately risky. They were made usually at a height of something under 500 feet, and the German anti-aircraft guns, made to fire straight into the air, and usually mounted on the crests of the ridges, could not be trained on the marauders. These airplanes did not content themselves with reconnaissance. They attacked the enemy in the trenches with bombs and machine-gun fire, and on many occasions completely demoralized him. There was one instance of a whole battalion surrendering to an airplane. Bouchavesnes

was taken largely by French fire from the air, and the last trench at Gueudecourt fell to a British airman.

The air, as we have seen, was the realm for individual prowess, and slowly from the multitude of combatants figures began to emerge of an epic greatness; men who steadily added to their tale of destruction, till in the world's eyes their work took the appearance of a grim rivalry. The Germans and the French made no secret of their heroes, but rather encouraged the advertisement of their names; but the Royal Flying Corps, true to its traditions, contented itself with a bare recital of the deed, till an occasional V.C. lifted the veil of anonymity. Germany possessed the great twin-brothers Boelcke and Immelmann, who rose to fame during the Verdun struggle. Immelmann was the chief exponent of the Fokker, and had eighteen victims to his credit when, on 18th June, he was shot down by Second Lieutenant McCubbin, who was still in his novitiate in the Royal Flying Corps. On 28th October Boelcke, who the day before had destroyed his fortieth Allied plane, perished in a collision. It is pleasant to record that these heroes of the air had the respect of their foes as well as the admiration of their friends, and the Allied airmen sent memorial wreaths to their funerals. The chief French champions were Guynemer and Nungesser, who survived the winter, in spite of adventures where every risk on earth was taken. In September, for example, Guynemer's machine was struck by a shell at an altitude of 10,000 feet. He made vain efforts to hold it up, but it dropped 5,000 feet, and was then caught by an air current and driven over the French lines. It crashed to earth and became an utter wreck; but the airman, though stunned, was unhurt. All records, however, were excelled by the British airman, Captain Albert Ball, formerly of the Sherwood Foresters. When not yet twenty he had taken part in over a hundred aerial combats, and had accounted for over thirty German machines. His life was fated to be as short as it was heroic, for he perished in the spring offensive of 1917, after having destroyed for certain forty-one enemy planes, with ten more practically certain, and many others where the likelihood was strong. No greater marvel of skill and intrepidity has been exhibited by any service in any army in any campaign in the history of the world.*

During the better part of the Somme battle the Allied machines were at least equal to the German in pace and handiness. The

* Captain Ball received the Victoria Cross posthumously. He had already won the D.S.O. and the Military Cross.

little Nieuport scouts, in especial, dealt death to the kite balloons, and the Martinsyde and de Havilland fighting planes were more than a match for the Fokker. In October, however, the enemy produced two new types—the Spad and the Halberstadt—both based on French models and possessing engines of 240 h.p. With them his airmen could work at a height of 20,000 feet and swoop down upon British machines moving at a lower altitude. Hence there came a time, at the close of the Somme operations, when the see-saw once again slightly inclined in the Germans' favour. The moment passed, and long before the 1917 offensive began the arrival of new and improved British types had redressed the balance.

The aerial warfare of 1916, as summarized by the French Staff, showed that 900 enemy airplanes had been destroyed by the Allies, the French accounting for 450, and the British for 250. Eighty-one kite balloons had been burned, fifty-four by the French, and twenty-seven by the British. Seven hundred and fifty bombardments had taken place, of which the French were responsible for 250 and the British for 180. Apart from tactical bombardments immediately behind the fighting line, the record of the year was least conspicuous in the matter of bomb-dropping. Experience had shown that the German public were peculiarly sensible to this mode of attack; but the preoccupation of the Allies with great battles limited the number of machines which could be spared for that purpose. Nevertheless some of the raids undertaken were singularly bold and effective, as a few examples will show. On 12th October a Franco-British squadron of forty machines attacked the Mauser rifle factory at Oberndorf on the Neckar, dropped nearly a thousand pounds' weight of projectiles, and fought their way home through a hornets' nest of enemy craft. On 22nd September two French airmen, Captain de Beauchamp and Lieutenant Daucourt, in a Sopwith biplane, visited and bombed the Krupp works at Essen—a *tour de force* rather than a work of military importance, for Essen did not suffer much from the limited number of bombs which could be carried on a 500-mile journey. On 17th November Captain de Beauchamp in the same machine flew over Friedrichshafen to Munich, which he bombed, and then crossed the Alps and descended in Italy. But the most sensational achievement was that of Second Lieutenant Marchal on a special type of Nieuport monoplane, who on the night of 20th June flew over Berlin, dropping leaflets. He was making for Russia; but unfortunately he had trouble with his machine,

and came down at Cholm, in Poland, where he was taken prisoner. He was then only sixty-three miles from the Russian trenches, and had travelled 811 miles.

The controversy raised by unofficial writers as to the administration of the British air service, which had sprung up originally when the first Zeppelin raids gave the civilian people of Britain food for thought, raged intermittently through 1916. It was a topic where the critic was at an advantage, for the ordinary man had no expert knowledge to test his criticism, and it was frequently impossible for the authorities to make reply, since that would have involved the publication of details valuable to the enemy. Any considerable increase in flying casualties brought the question to the fore, and the natural anxiety of the British citizen to make certain of the efficiency of a service on which he depended for his safety was buttressed by the grievances of private aircraft makers against the Royal Aircraft Factory at Farnborough. The private maker was indeed in a difficult case. His market must be with the Government; to the Government he looked for recompense for the toil and money he had spent in new production; and jealousy was inevitable of a State business which seemed to take the bread out of the mouth of a deserving industry.

In August a committee was appointed to consider the state of affairs at Farnborough, when various faults were discovered, and a scheme of reorganization proposed. Another committee sat throughout the summer, investigating the charges brought by press and parliamentary critics against the administration and command of the Royal Flying Corps. The inquiry was a personal triumph for the Director-General of Military Aeronautics, Sir David Henderson, who had no difficulty in disposing of the foolish charges, based on hearsay evidence or no evidence at all, which had been showered on his organization. At the same time, many unsatisfactory points were revealed, and the committee recommended that the Royal Aircraft Factory should be regarded rather as an experimental centre than as a manufacturing establishment, and urged that the efficiency of the service required that the fighting command should be separated from the responsibility for supplying equipment. The latter task should belong to a special department, which should meet the demands both of the Army and the Navy.

This last recommendation exposed one of the main difficulties of the question. The Navy and the Army were in perpetual competition, and the Air Board formed under the presidency of

Lord Curzon in May 1916 could not control the quarrel. When Lord Curzon in December went to the War Cabinet he was succeeded at the Air Board by Lord Sydenham, who presently resigned. Mr. Lloyd George some weeks later attempted to solve the problem by reconstituting the Air Board with Lord Cowdray in charge, and appointing Commander Paine to be the air member of the Board of Admiralty, as Sir David Henderson was air member of the Army Council. The production of machines for both the naval and military services was handed over to the Ministry of Munitions. The change was an improvement, but few people believed that it was a final solution of the problem. The administration of a new and swiftly developing service is more intricate at home than in the field. The demands of two separate organizations had to be faced—the Navy and the Army—organizations that differed largely in their requirements. The private makers had to be kept in touch with the needs of the fighting services; they had to be controlled and advised, and at the same time their initiative in research and experiment must not be crippled. Finally, the executive command of the service must not be confused with the duty of supplying *matériel*, for the two tasks were poles apart. The Air Service had from small beginnings grown rapidly to great dimensions, and the need for differentiation of functions had risen. That is never an easy matter to settle, and it was not made easier by the pressure of instant war needs.

Beginning in August 1915, the British people saw a series of Zeppelin visitations which grew bolder as the winter advanced. On the last day of March 1916 for the first time a Zeppelin came down within sight of eyes watching from British soil. Our descendants will look back upon the era of those raids as one of the most curious in the history of the country. The face of the land was changed. Lighting restrictions plunged great cities into gloom, and London became as dim as in the days of Queen Anne, and vastly more dangerous for the pedestrian, owing to a speed of traffic undreamed of in the eighteenth century. Never had the metropolis looked more beautiful than on moonless nights, when small sparks of orange light gave mystery to the great thoroughfares and the white fingers of searchlights groped in the heavens. But never had it been a more uncomfortable habitation. The busy life of the capital had to adapt itself to the conditions of a remote and backward country town.

It cannot be said that the raids had any real effect upon the good spirits and confidence of our people. Indeed at first they were

taken too lightly, and regarded by the ordinary citizen rather as curious variety shows than as incidents of ruthless war. The first Zeppelin visits found us unprepared, and our only security lay in the unhandiness of the weapon employed. As the months passed we perfected our scheme of defence, and realized more clearly the limitations of the menace. Zeppelin attacks were largely blind. The great airships rarely knew where they were, and were compelled to drop their bombs on speculation, and the German reports of damage done had seldom much relation to the facts. Our anti-aircraft defences were largely increased, but we realized from the start that the true anti-Zeppelin weapon was the airplane, as Mr. Churchill had long before prophesied. To use it our pilots must practise the difficult task of making ascents and descents in the darkness. Once they had attained proficiency in night-work there was every reason to hope that the Zeppelins would no longer reach our shores unscathed. The early autumn of 1916 made these hopes a certainty.

Early in May, in a spell of bad weather, five German airships visited the north-east coast of England and the east coast of Scotland. Little damage was done, and one of them, L20, was wrecked on its return voyage. At the end of July the weather grew warm and still, and the raids became frequent. On the night of 28th July three airships visited the Yorkshire and Lincolnshire coast, but they lost their way in the summer fog, and dropped their bombs in the sea and on empty fields. On the night of the 31st they came again, this time seven in number, and their area of attack stretched from the Thames estuary to the Humber. Their aim seemed to be to drop incendiary bombs among the growing crops, but little damage was done, and no lives were lost. On 3rd August eight appeared on the east coast, after attacking British trawlers out at sea. Again they lost their way, and after killing some live-stock were driven home by our guns. A week later a bolder attack was made, A flotilla, variously estimated at from seven to ten in number, appeared on the east coast of England and Scotland. A number of towns were attacked, half a dozen people were killed and some fifty injured, but no material damage was done. Then came a lull, during the August moonlight, and it was not till the night of 24th August that the raiders came again. There were six of them, and five were driven away by our gun-fire from the sea-coast town which they attacked. One succeeded in getting as far as London and dropped bombs in a working-class suburb, killing and wounding a number of poor

people, mostly women and children. It was the last raid under the old régime. Henceforth the Zeppelin was to meet a weapon more powerful than itself.

Saturday, 2nd September, was a heavy day, with an overcast sky, which cleared up at twilight. The situation on the Somme was becoming desperate, and Germany resolved to send against Britain the largest airship flotilla she had yet dispatched. There were ten Zeppelins, several of the newest and largest type, and three Schütte-Lanz military airships, and their objective was London and the great manufacturing cities of the Midlands. The Zeppelins completely lost their way. They wandered over East Anglia, dropping irrelevant bombs, and received a warm reception from the British guns. The military airships made for London. Ample warning of their coming had been given, and the city was in deep darkness, save for the groping searchlights. The streets were full of people, whose curiosity mastered their prudence, and they were rewarded by one of the most marvellous spectacles which the war had yet provided. Two of the marauders were driven off by our gun-fire, but one attempted to reach the city from the east. After midnight the sky was clear and star-strewn. The sound of the guns was heard, and patches of bright light appeared in the heavens where our shells were bursting. Shortly after two o'clock in the morning of the 3rd, about 10,000 feet up in the air, an airship was seen moving south-westward. She dived and then climbed, as if to escape the shells, and for a moment seemed to be stationary. There came a burst of smoke which formed a screen around her and hid her from view, and then far above appeared little points of light. Suddenly the searchlights were shut off and the guns stopped. The next second the airship was visible like a glowing cigar, turning rapidly to a red and angry flame. She began to fall in a blazing wisp, lighting up the whole sky, so that country folk fifty miles off saw the portent. The spectators broke into wild cheering, for from some cause or other the raider had met his doom. The cause was soon known. Several airmen had gone up to meet the enemy, and one of them, Lieutenant William Leefe Robinson, formerly of the Worcester Regiment, a young man of twenty-one, had come to grips with her. When he found her, he was 2,000 feet below her, but he climbed rapidly and soon won the upper position. He closed, and though the machine gun on the top of the airship opened fire on him, he got in his blow in time. No such duel had ever been fought before, 10,000 feet up in the sky, in the view of hundreds of thousands of spectators over

an area of a thousand square miles. The airship fell blazing in a field at Cuffley, near Enfield, a few miles north of London, and the bodies of the crew of sixteen were charred beyond recognition. Lieutenant Robinson received the Victoria Cross, for he was the first man to grapple successfully with an enemy airship by night, and to point the way to the true line of British defence. It was no easy victory. Such a combat against the far stronger armament of the airship, and exposed to constant danger from our own bursting shells, involved risks little short of a forlorn hope in the battlefield.

On the night of 23rd September the raiders came again. Twelve Zeppelins crossed the eastern shore line, making for London. Almost at once they were scattered by gun fire, and only two pursued their journey to the capital, where they succeeded in dropping bombs in a suburb of small houses. Of the others one attacked a Midland town. The total British casualties were thirty killed and 110 injured. But they paid dearly for their enterprise. One, L33, was so seriously damaged by our anti-aircraft guns that she fled out to sea, and then, realizing that this meant certain death, returned to land, and came down in an Essex field. Her men, twenty-two in number, set her on fire, and then marched along the road to Colchester till they found a special constable, to whom they surrendered. The destruction was imperfectly done, and the remains gave the British authorities the complete details of the newest type of Zeppelin. A second, L32, was attacked by two of our airmen. The end was described by a special constable on duty. "In the searchlight beams she looked like an incandescent bar of white-hot steel. Then she staggered and swung to and fro in the air for just a perceptible moment of time. That, no doubt, was the instant when the damage was done, and the huge craft became unmanageable. Then, without drifting at all from her approximate place in the sky, without any other preliminary, she fell like a stone, first horizontally—that is, in her sailing trim—then in a position which rapidly became perpendicular, she went down, a mass of flames."

Germany had begun to fare badly in the air, but popular clamour and the vast sums sunk in Zeppelin manufacture prevented her from giving up the attempt. On the night of Monday, 25th September, seven Zeppelins crossed the east coast, aiming at the industrial districts of the Midlands and the north. The wide area of the attack and the thick ground-mist enabled them to return without loss, after bombing various working-class districts.

The Germans claimed to have done damage to the great munition area, and even to have "bombarded the British naval port of Portsmouth." As a matter of fact, no place of any military importance and no munition factory suffered harm. The losses were among humble people living in the flimsy houses of industrial suburbs. A more formidable attempt was made on 1st October. It was a clear, dark night when ten Zeppelins made landfall on their way to London. But they found that the capital was ringed by defences in the air and on the ground which made approach impossible. The attack became a complete fiasco. About midnight one Zeppelin, L31, approached the north-east environs, and was engaged by a British airplane. The watching thousands saw the now familiar sight—a glow and then a falling wisp of flame. The airship crashed to earth in a field near Potter's Bar. The crew perished to a man, including the officer in charge, Lieutenant-Commander Mathy, the best-known of all the Zeppelin pilots. He it was who had commanded the raiding airships in September and October 1915. He had always ridiculed the value of airplanes as an anti-Zeppelin weapon; but by the irony of fate he was to fall to a single machine, guided by a young officer of twenty-six.

During the wild weather of late October and early November there was a breathing space. The next attempt, warned by past experiences, steered clear of London, and aimed at the north-east coast, which, it was assumed, would be less strongly defended. It came on the night of 27th November, in cold, windless weather. One airship, after dropping a few bombs in Durham and Yorkshire, was engaged by a plane off the Durham coast. Once again came the glow and then the wisp of flame; the airship split in two before reaching the sea; the debris sank, and when day broke only a scum on the water marked its resting-place. Another wandered across the Midlands on its work of destruction, and in the morning steered for home, closely pursued by our airplanes and bombarded by our guns. It left the land going very fast at a height of 8,000 feet, but nine miles out to sea it was attacked by four machines of the Royal Naval Air Service, as well as by the guns of an armed trawler. The issue was not long in doubt, and presently the Zeppelin fell blazing to the water.

The year 1916 was disastrous to the Zeppelin legend. The loss of twelve of these great machines, each costing from a quarter to half a million pounds to build, was admitted by the enemy, and beyond doubt there were other losses unreported. The Zeppelin

fleet was now sadly reduced in effectives, and it had lost still more in repute. A way had been found to meet the menace, and it was improbable that any future adaptation of the Zeppelin could break down the new defence. But the peril from the air was not over, as some too rashly concluded. Throughout the year there had been a number of attacks by German airplanes, which rarely extended beyond the towns in the south-eastern corner of England. Such attacks were not formidable, the raiders being as a rule in a desperate hurry to be gone. But it occurred to many, watching the advent of the new Spad and Halberstadt machines on the Western front, that in that quarter lay a threat to England more formidable than the airship. An airplane with a 240-h.p. engine, which could fly at a great speed at a height of close on 20,000 feet, could travel in broad daylight, and pass unchallenged to its goal. If we had not the type of machine to climb fast and operate at the same altitude, such a raider would be safe from attack alike by plane and gun fire. On the 28th of November a German machine, flying very high, dropped nine bombs on London. The raider was brought down in France on its way home, and among its furniture was a large-scale map of London. The incident was trifling in itself, but in many minds it raised unpleasing reflections. Our planes had beaten the invading Zeppelin. We might still have to face the invading airplane.

CHAPTER LXIX.

POLITICAL TRANSFORMATIONS.

October 13–*December* 7, 1916.

Effect of Battle of the Somme in Germany—Slave Raids in Belgium—German Auxiliary Service Bill—Proclamation of an independent Poland—M. Briand and his Cabinet—Joffre superseded by Nivelle—Mr. Lloyd George becomes Prime Minister.

THE closing months of 1916 were remarkable for a series of political upheavals and transformations among all the belligerents such as attend inevitably the advanced stages of a great struggle. The first optimism is succeeded by discouragement, which is followed in turn by a fatalistic resolution. But the stauncher this resolution grows, and the more certain the assurance of ultimate victory, the less tolerant will a nation be of supineness and blundering in its governors. If a man is called upon to make extreme sacrifices he will not readily permit any class of his fellows to escape more easily, and if his doings are tried by a hard test he will apply a rigorous touchstone to the performance of his betters. Again, if a Ministry at such a stage is apt to be sternly judged, its task has also very special intrinsic difficulties. The nearer the decisive moment approaches the more urgent becomes the duty of prevision, and the more difficult its fulfilment. All the ancient landmarks and guide-posts have gone; the old world which endured into the first year of war has now vanished; and, if the statesmen are still the same as those who administered that lost world, they are handicapped by irrelevant memories. Lastly, war weariness will have overtaken many who started on the road with a brisk step and a purposeful eye, and a nation, rising slowly towards a supreme effort, will be impatient of leaders who seem to falter and fumble.

In Germany the ferment stopped short of its natural effect. No Minister fell from power, but the Government was driven into strange courses. Happily for itself it had to deal with a docile

people—a credulous people who accepted incredible things, an obedient people who swallowed with scarcely a grimace unpalatable medicines. Yet even in Germany public opinion could not be wholly neglected, and the policy of the German Government was directed not less to explaining away the crisis which faced them than to taking steps to meet it.

The Battle of the Somme, as we have seen, had profoundly affected German popular opinion. No official obscurantism could conceal its ravages; indeed the very silence of the newspapers, and the minimizing tone which they adopted in their infrequent comments, increased the mystery and awe which cloaked that front. The plain man knew only that the place was thick with his kinsfolks' graves, and all who possessed any influence struggled to have their friends sent eastwards rather than to that ill-omened angle of France. Instructed military opinion was aware that for the first time the German machine had been utterly outmatched, and that France and Britain had prepared their own weapon, growing daily in strength, which, unless a miracle happened, must sooner or later break down the German defence. In Ludendorff's ominous words, "If the war lasted our defeat seemed inevitable." The storms of the autumn had given a brief respite, but the blow had not been parried, but only deferred. A horror of the place fell on the German people, from the simplest peasant to the most exalted commanders. More and more they saw advancing from Picardy the shadows of catastrophe—

> "The darkness of that battle in the West
> Where all of high and holy dies away."

In such a time of depression Falkenhayn's Rumanian success came as a blessed stimulant to the national spirit. A hungry people was promised a bounty of Rumanian corn and oil; the swift campaign seemed to show German arms as resistless as ever; the fate of Rumania was a warning to any neutral that might dare to draw the sword against the Teutonic League. But on this matter the High Command could have no delusions. They had driven back the armies of a little nation which was desperately short of munitions and had made a serious strategical blunder; but the success had small bearing on the real problem. The extension of their lines to the Sereth shortened their Eastern front as compared with its position in September, but it did no more. It still gave them some extra hundreds of miles of line to hold as compared with August. The promise of Rumanian supplies had been falsified.

The oil-fields were in ruins, and most of the grain had been destroyed or removed; the balance was a mere drop in the bucket of Teutonic needs, and would only lead to bitter quarrels as to its allocation. Moreover, the Rumanian retreat had not perplexed or divided the Allies' plans. Russia had made scarcely a change in her main dispositions, and not a man or a gun had been moved from the West. Germany—in the eyes of those best fitted to judge—had only added to her barren occupations of territory, and increased the commitments of her waning strength.

Hence, while the joy-bells rang in Berlin, and the Emperor repeated his familiar speech about his irresistible sword, the true rulers of Germany were busy with devices which proved that in their opinion the outlook was growing desperate. The peace proposals and their sequel, unrestricted submarine warfare, must be left to later chapters. Here we are concerned with the two burning problems which demanded an immediate answer—the shortage of men and the shortage of supplies.

With regard to the first, during the early autumn German policy seems to have wavered. At one time men were "combed out" from industries for the field; at another they were sent back to industrial life from the fighting line. But with November a great step was decided upon. A War Bureau was established, to which were handed over eight separate branches—the Works Department, the Field Ordnance Department, the Munitions Department, the War Raw Materials Department, the Factory Department, the Substitution Service Office, the Food Supply Department, and the Export and Import Department. At its head was placed one of the ablest of Germany's organizing brains, the Würtemberg soldier, General von Gröner, who had previously been at the head of the Military Railway Service. This step was taken largely at the instigation of Hindenburg, who in two letters to the Imperial Chancellor reviewed candidly the economic situation, and demanded the organized exploitation of every class of industrial and rural labour—of the former, that the Allied efforts might be met and surpassed; of the latter, that the former might have sufficient supplies to make their work effective. Accordingly the Auxiliary Service Bill was passed by the Reichstag on 2nd December, legalizing the *levée-en-masse*. Contrary to expectation, women were not included. Every male German between the ages of seventeen and sixty-one, who had not been summoned to the armed forces, was liable for auxiliary service, which was defined as consisting, "apart from service in Government offices or official

institutions, in service in war industry, in agriculture, in the nursing of the sick, and in every kind of organization of an economic character connected with the war, as well as in undertakings which are directly or indirectly of importance for the purpose of the conduct of the war or the provision of the requirements of the people." The recruitment was to be locally managed, and compulsion was not to be applied until the call for volunteers had failed. The purpose was twofold—to substitute as far as possible in the non-combatant branches men liable to auxiliary service for men liable to military service, and to make certain that the work of the civilian manhood of Germany was used in the spheres most vital for the conduct of the war.*

In her quest of man-power Germany cast her net beyond her native territories. From the beginning of October onward the inhabitants of the occupied Belgian provinces were rigorously conscripted for war work on her behalf. Partly these were workmen already thrown out of employment by the closing down of Belgian factories, but largely they were men engaged in private undertakings who were peremptorily ordered to labour for their new masters. Slave raids—for they were nothing better—were conducted on a gigantic scale, and some hundreds of thousands of Belgians were carried over the German frontiers. When the labourers learned on what tasks they were to be employed, there was frequent resistance, and this was crushed with consistent brutality. Belgium had already been stripped of her industrial plant, her foodstuffs, and her rolling stock for Germany's benefit, and she had now to surrender the poor remnant of her man-power. Her Foreign Minister appealed to neutral countries and to the Vatican, and the scandal was so great that President Wilson was moved to protest. But for the moment the Allies were helpless. They were obliged by considerations of common humanity to continue their work of feeding the Belgian people by means of a neutral Commission, even though Germany was using it to her own advantage by exporting foodstuffs from Belgium, and suspending public relief works that she might have an excuse for her deportations. The reckoning must wait yet awhile, but the "man-hunting" of the autumn added to it another heavy item. The British Government, in the words of its Foreign Secretary, could give Belgium only one answer: "That they will use their utmost power to bring the war to a speedy and successful con-

* The scheme, as it turned out, was better on paper than in practice. See Ludendorff's criticism, *My War Memories* (Eng. trans.), I., 328, etc.

clusion, and thus to liberate Belgium once and for all from the dangers which continually menace her so long as the enemy remains in occupation of her territory. This is a cardinal aim and object of all the Allies, and the people of the British Empire have already been inspired by this latest proof of German brutality with renewed determination to make every sacrifice for the attainment of that end."

Germany looked also to the occupied territories in the East for a new recruitment. She had already made use of starvation to try and attract workmen from Russian Poland westward to her own factories. Now she took a bold step, for, with the object of enlisting Polish regiments for her army, she announced on 5th November that, in conjunction with Austria, she proposed to establish an independent Poland with an hereditary monarchy and a constitution. The thing had been long in the air, and the establishment of a Polish university at Warsaw had been one of the steps to it; but the official announcement had been delayed so long as Berlin believed that there was hope of making a separate peace with Russia. Now that hope had gone, and Germany burned the boats that might have made a passage to Petrograd. The new Polish kingdom was to be but a small affair, for Posen and Galicia, which contained half the Polish race, were not included. It was to be a satellite of the Central Powers, and some one of their numerous princelings would be set on this caricature of the throne of John Sobieski. The very wording of the proclamation betrayed its purpose. There was to be a Polish army, with an "organization, training, and command" to be "regulated by mutual agreement," and the German Press, commenting on the point, made it clear that such an army was to be a mere reserve for Germany to draw upon. "Germany's security," wrote the semi-official *North German Gazette*, "demands that for all future times the Russian armies shall not be able to use a militarily consolidated Poland as an invasion gate of Silesia and West Prussia." With this motive so brazenly conspicuous, it required some audacity to claim that Germany and Austria now stood out nobly before the world as the true protectors of small nations. Hindenburg wanted recruits, and had demanded 700,000 by hook or by crook from Russian Poland. The new Poland was to be like Napoleon's Grand-Duchy of Warsaw, established with the same purpose, and at the same price.

The move incensed Russia—even those elements in her Government which were prepared to look favourably on a separate

peace. A proud nation will scarcely submit with equanimity to the spectacle of another Power giving away its territory and conscripting its own subjects for a war against it. Nor could the long-felt and passionate desire of the Poles for national unity be satisfied by such meagre territorial limits or such an ignoble vassaldom. *Non tali auxilio, nec defensoribus istis.* Unhappily, the Polish people were split into a hundred groups and rivalries, and there were many elements which were won over to the German policy. But the better elements in the race and its ablest leaders stood scornfully aloof. Germany gained nothing of practical value by her proclamation. The manhood of Russian Poland had already been mainly recruited for the Russian ranks. In the great retreat of the summer of 1915, the vast proportion of the remaining able-bodied men had been swept eastward into Russian areas. So far as she could by vigorous enlistment for the Polish Legion,* and by conscription for industrial work, Germany had already sucked the occupied territories dry. In the approbation of her own press and the encomiums of her tame Warsaw professors, she had to look for her reward.

To meet the second of her problems, the shortage of supplies, she had no very clear resource. The ingenious Food Controller, Herr Batocki, had done his best to compel two and two to make five, but he had not succeeded; and beyond doubt, especially in the handling of the potato crop, grave errors had been committed, and certain areas and classes suffered not only from scanty rations but from a burning sense of unfair treatment. As the expected gains from the Rumanian campaign shrank into a very modest bounty, the problem of the Food Controller became insoluble. Only one course remained—to satisfy popular feeling by a ruthless submarine campaign. If Britain blockaded Germany, then Germany in turn would blockade Britain, and through the early winter the temper of all classes of the nation was moving towards a great act of revenge and defence in the spring. But no dreams of the future could obliterate the extreme awkwardness of the present. Germany had before her nine months of short commons before she

* The Polish Legion, fighting on the Austrian side, grew out of the militant wing of the Polish Socialist party in Warsaw during the Russian revolutionary troubles of 1905. The militants, when repudiated by the party in 1906, withdrew to Galicia and organized on a military basis. Their numbers throughout the earlier part of the campaign were between 30,000 and 50,000. Their leader, Pilsudski, was made an Austrian brigadier-general, and in the spring of 1916, during the battles on the Stokhod, actually withdrew his troops from the line as a political move. His German army commander promptly cashiered him.

could look for any relief. Though the rations of her troops were not cut down below the standard necessary to ensure health and vigour, their monotony was a subject of universal complaint. In many interior districts the shortage was not far removed from want, and there was a general under-nourishment of the whole people. The suffering was embittered by the suspicion, only too well founded, that certain classes were exempt from it, and were even waxing fat on the leanness of others. At no time in modern German history were the agrarian magnates of Prussia the objects of such violent criticism. Moreover, there was bad feeling between the constituent states. Bavaria and South Germany in general complained that they were being sacrificed to satisfy Prussia's need. In many a prisoners' camp on the Western front Bavarian and Brandenburger came to blows, and the subject of controversy, as often as not, was the greed of the northerners.

The utterances of official Germany during the autumn and early winter provided an interesting reflex of the hopes and depressions which beset the German mind. In October the Imperial Crown Prince, who had of late fallen sadly out of the picture, sought rehabilitation by a discourse on the beauties of peace. His lyrical cry was confided to an American journalist, and formed one of the interludes of comedy in the grim business of war. He sighed over the commercial depravity of America, which had led her financiers to invest in the Allied chances of success, and quoted the Bible as a warning against the lust of gain. He deplored the expenditure of human talent on the work of destruction, and assured his interviewer that every man in the German ranks "would far rather see all this labour, skill, education, intellectual resource, and physical power devoted to the task of upholding and lengthening life," such as the conquest of disease. He proclaimed his passion for domesticity, and his grief at being separated from his household. He paid modest tributes to the quality of the enemy. "It is a pity," he said, "that all cannot be gentlemen and sportsmen, even if we are enemies." And lastly he spoke of flowers and music, that he might complete the part of the Happy Warrior. In the same month a different type of man took up a different parable. Hindenburg informed a Viennese journalist that the situation on every front was secure and hopeful. He announced that he was ready, if necessary, for a thirty years' war. France was even now exhausted. She had called Britain to her assistance, and "the help which her Ally gives is that she is forcing the French to destroy themselves." Britain had no military

genius, and Russia's numbers could never learn true battle discipline. "How long will the war last? That depends upon our opponents. Prophecy is thankless, and it is better to abandon it in war-time. It is possible that 1917 will bring battles that will decide the war, but I do not know, and nobody knows. I only know that we will fight to a decision."

These were brave words. They were spoken to raise the drooping spirits of Austria, and they had their effect so long as daily advances east of the Carpathians could be reported. But the governors of Germany were not contemplating a thirty years' war; they were cudgelling their brains to think how their Rumanian success could be turned to profit, for well they knew that it was of use only as an advertisement, and that the true situation was very desperate. Bethmann-Hollweg on 9th November made a speech in the Reichstag which showed the inmost cogitations of Berlin. The orations of the Imperial Chancellor were at all times a good barometer of German opinion, for their mechanical adroitness revealed more than it concealed. During 1915 he had explicitly stated his aim as such an increase of strength as would enable Germany to defy a united Europe. "If Europe is to arrive at peace, it can only be through the strong and inviolable position of Germany"—a revival of the policy of Charles V. and Louis XIV. In the first half of 1916 his tone was the same. Belgium and Poland must be brought under the control of Germany, and peace could only be considered on the basis of the war-map. But after the misfortunes of the summer he changed his phrasing. On 29th September he announced: "From the first day the war meant for us nothing but the defence of our right to life, freedom, and development;" but he left the last word, the crux of the whole matter, undefined.

The speech of 9th November was skilfully advertised beforehand, and had obviously been prepared with great care as the starting-point of a new diplomatic phase. It contained the usual roseate summary of the situation upon all the fronts; but its importance lay in the fact that for the first time the Imperial Chancellor talked at large about peace. He laboured to prepare the right atmosphere by showing that Germany's hands were clean, that she had had no intention of conquest when she drew the sword, and that from first to last she had waged a defensive war. He attempted to cast upon Russia the whole responsibility for the immediate outbreak, since the "act which made war inevitable was the Russian general mobilization ordered on the

night of July 30–31, 1914." This dubious historical retrospect was the basis for a declaration on the subject of the future after the war. Sir Edward Grey (now Lord Grey of Fallodon), in an earlier speech, had spoken of an international league to preserve peace. The German Chancellor professed himself in agreement. But peace could only be ensured " if the principle of free development was made to prevail not only on the land but on the sea." And it must involve the dissolution of all aggressive coalitions. The Triple Entente had been based solely on jealousy of and hostility towards Germany, while the Central Powers had never had any thought but of an honourable defence. Let peace come, said the Chancellor, and let it be guaranteed by the strongest sanctions that the wit of man can devise, and Germany will gladly co-operate —provided it allows for her free and just development. On the word " development " hung all the law and the prophets. The speech, it is clear, was addressed to neutral opinion rather than to the speaker's countrymen. It aimed at creating an atmosphere of reasonableness. Victorious Germany, fresh from her brilliant Rumanian conquests, and unbeaten on every front, was prepared to appeal to the sense of decency of the neutral world. She, the victor, alone could speak with dignity of peace. It needed little acumen to see that the Imperial Chancellor's utterance was the first move in a new game.

The political situation in Russia during the autumn was, as we have seen, in the highest degree confused and perplexing. On one point, indeed, the issue was clear. The German challenge in Poland received prompt answer. Russia restated the views which she had already publicly expressed, and announced that nothing would drive her from her purpose of creating a free and united Poland under her protection, " from all three of her now incomplete tribal districts." But in domestic politics there was no such unity of purpose, and already the frail dykes were cracking under the rising floods.

In Italy the Boselli Government had no crisis to face such as threatened others of the Allies. The chief event of the autumn and early winter was a futile attempt on the part of the extreme Socialists to commit the Chamber to peace negotiations, for which German agents were striving throughout the world to create an atmosphere. On 13th October Signor Bissolati,* the Civil Commis-

* When Italy declared war he had enlisted in the Alpini, though over military age, and had been severely wounded and decorated for valour.

sioner of War in the Cabinet, had spoken strongly on the matter. "I think that any state or states of the Alliance which to-day harboured thoughts of peace would be guilty of an act of treason. Rather than accept peace contaminated with the germs of future wars it would have been better not to have embarked on the present struggle at all. The germ of war can only be killed by destroying Austria as a state, and by depriving Germany of every illusion of predominance." Italy, as we know, had difficulties peculiar to herself. Her popular feeling was mobilized rather against Austria than Germany, and the ancient ramifications of German intrigue and German finance in her midst, combined with the very real economic suffering which the war now entailed, made her liable to sudden spasms of popular discontent and suspicion. Almost alone among the Allies, she had an avowed anti-war and Germanophil party to reckon with. At the end of November the pro-German Socialists in the Chamber, led by a Jew of German extraction, brought forward a motion in favour of immediate peace, to be secured by the mediation of the United States of America. The Chamber dealt drastically with the motion, rejecting it by 293 votes to 47, and Signor Boselli, the Premier, restated in eloquent words the central principle of the Allies. "Peace must be a pact born of armed victory—a peace for which Italy has drawn the sword in the name of maritime and territorial claims, that are not mere poetry, but a reality of her history and of her existence; a peace which, in order to be lasting, must replace the equilibrium of the old treaties by an equilibrium built up upon the rights of nationalism. We seek not the peace of a day, but the peace of new centuries."

The Government of M. Briand had not at any time an easy seat, and during the early winter it had to face a series of petty crises. In France there was no ebullition of pacificism worth the name. The futile demonstration of the socialist M. Brizon, in September, was overwhelmed by the Premier's torrential eloquence, and its author exposed to general ridicule. But M. Briand held office rather because no alternative was very obvious than because he had the assent of all parties. He was somewhat autocratic in his methods, and preferred to govern with the minimum of parliamentary assistance. The difficulties in the Near East, in which France had a peculiar interest, and the apparent futility of the Allied policy in Greece, did not make his task simpler.

The discontent of the opposition came to a head in the close of November and beginning of December. The scarcity of coal, the

high price of food, the losses of the Somme campaign, certain failures in transport, and doubts as to the capacity of various elements in the High Command, made a basis for criticism of the Government. In a series of stormy secret sessions, which revealed a curious regrouping of parties, M. Briand was called upon to defend his policy. He succeeded, though his majority dwindled and most of the deputies on leave from the Front were found voting in the minority. The result of the debates was that he was given a mandate to reconstruct his Government, and to reorganize the High Command. The first was a matter of consolidation and readjustment, rather than the sweeping innovation which about the same time was taking place in Britain. The Cabinet was made smaller, three departments being grouped under one chief. The Prime Minister still held the portfolio of Foreign Affairs, M. Ribot remained at the Exchequer, and Admiral Lacaze at the Ministry of Marine. An inner executive Cabinet was constructed in the shape of a War Committee of five on the British model. The most interesting appointment was that of General Lyautey, the Resident-General in Morocco, to the Ministry of War. On his great ability and experience all Frenchmen were agreed ; but there was some doubt as to how a soldier, whose life had been mainly spent abroad, and who had no parliamentary experience, would work with the Chamber. It looked as if the extra-parliamentary nature of the administration, which had been the chief topic of M. Briand's critics, was to be accentuated by the reconstruction.

Far more remarkable were the changes in the High Command. Popular opinion in France was passing through a critical stage, and for the first time civilian views and political personalities tended to influence directly military plans and the High Command. The Somme had not been the decisive victory that had been looked for, and France's losses there, following upon those at Verdun, had alarmed the Cabinet, and, much exaggerated by rumour, had shocked the ordinary public. Foch was the first to suffer. A motoring accident in November was made an excuse for removing him from his command, and for several months the greatest of living soldiers was unemployed. Then the wave reached Joffre, and that robust figure was swept from his place. His unrelieved optimism had become a mannerism that palled ; some said he was growing senile ; it was rumoured, too, that he considered that France's great part in the war was over and that the main attacks must now be left to the British. So he relinquished the office of Generalissimo, which he had held since the outbreak of war, and

was nominated military adviser to the new War Committee, being at the same time created a Marshal of France, the first holder of that famous title to be appointed by the Third Republic. To the command in the West Nivelle succeeded, a much younger man who had won brilliant successes at Verdun, and had a plan for winning a speedy and final victory by methods very different from the tortoise-like progression of the Somme. The military significance of these changes will be discussed later; here let us take leave of one of the most honourable and attractive figures that this narrative will reveal. The services of Joffre to his country and to the Allied cause had been beyond all computation, and in the history of the time his is one of the two or three names that will shine most brightly. To his skill and nerve and patience was due the triumph of the Marne, won when the skies were darkest, which destroyed for ever the German hope of victory. He had been, like Ajax, the pillar and shield of his people, and his rock-like figure had held the confidence of his country since the guns first opened in Alsace. To him more than to any other man was due the superb military effort of France and her unyielding resolution. He had brilliant lieutenants, some of them his superiors in the technical accomplishments of a soldier, but his was always the deciding will and the directing brain.

During the autumn it was becoming clear that the Coalition Government in Britain was rapidly sinking in public esteem. There was perhaps less captious criticism of particular Ministers than there had been a year before; but there was a deep-seated dissatisfaction, and an impatience the more dangerous in that it was more rarely expressed in words. The root of the feeling was the belief that the Government was too much inclined to try to cure an earthquake by small political pills. "The war is a cyclone," Mr. Lloyd George had told the trade unions, "which is tearing up by the roots the ornamental plants of modern society, and wrecking some of the flimsy trestle bridges of modern civilization. It is an earthquake which is upheaving the very rocks of European life. It is one of those seismic disturbances in which nations leap forward or fall back generations in a single bound." The ordinary citizen believed this, and looked for proofs of a like conviction in the public acts of his Government.

The Coalition formed in May 1915 had not been a mobilization of the best talent of the nation, but a compromise between party interests. It contained most of the men who in the previous

Liberal Government had been responsible for the mistakes and over-confidence of the first nine months of war. Its guiding principle had resembled too closely that of an ordinary British Government in times of peace—to keep the Ministry together at all costs by a series of eirenica and formulas ill suited to a supreme crisis, for, as has been well said, "the tremulous cohesion of a vacillating Ministry is not the same thing as national unity." It had seemed to many people to lack courage. All its members declared that great sacrifices were necessary for victory; but when it came to the question of a particular sacrifice they were apt to hesitate. The result of the National Service controversy proved that this hesitation was needless. In this, as in other matters, the people were in advance of their governors. It would be unfair to deny that a vast deal of good work had been done between May 1915 and December 1916; but in many vital matters efficiency was to seek, and, generally speaking, there was more political than administrative talent among Ministers. Further, the main machinery was not fitted for the prompt dispatch of business. A Cabinet of twenty-three members, even with the added device of special War Committees, is not an ideal body for prompt decision and quick action. To quote Mr. Lloyd George again, "You cannot conduct a war with a sanhedrin."

During the autumn of 1916 men of all classes were beginning to ask themselves whether the Government, as then constituted, was capable of bringing the war to a successful issue. Instances of apparent timidity and lack of forethought and imagination had so grown in number as to constitute a weighty, if unformulated, indictment in the popular mind. Many of the charges were unfair. The unsatisfactory position in the Near East sprang from causes most of which could not be rightly laid to the charge of the Coalition. The disasters of Rumania were blamed, with little reason, on the Foreign Office. The halt of the British advance on the Somme, due to bad weather, was made the occasion by certain irresponsible critics for declaring that the great battle had failed, that our Western strategy was a blunder, and that the lives of our young men had been squandered in vain. But there were other complaints which had greater substance. The whole question of pensions was unsatisfactory, and there was growing discontent among the classes concerned. The Air Board seemed to be without a clear policy; the revival of German long-range submarine activity, contrary to popular expectation, suggested that all was not well at the Admiralty. The military authorities had warned the nation

that we should have to make large further levies on our man-power; and at the end of September 1915 a Man-Power Distribution Board was appointed to deal with the matter. The Board recommended a wholesale drafting of semi-skilled and unskilled men below a certain age into the Army, and the filling of their places by volunteers and women. Its report was submitted on 9th November, but it looked as if no immediate action would be taken. Finally, the rise of prices convinced every householder that presently, unless something was done, there would be a serious shortage of food and conceivably a famine. In June 1915 a Committee had been appointed under Lord Milner to consider the question of food production at home. A month later it reported, urging, among other things, that a guarantee of prices should be given for wheat grown on land broken up from grass, and that the country should be organized in local units for the distribution of labour and the supply of seeds and fertilizers. The report was pigeon-holed, the Government accepting the view of the minority that the submarine menace was now well in hand; that there was no fear of a short supply of wheat from abroad; and that it was "unnecessary to adopt any extraordinary measures to ensure a home-grown supply, even if the war should extend beyond the autumn of 1916." In the said autumn this complacency had been rudely broken. On November 15, 1916, Mr. Runciman announced the appointment of a Food Controller; but no Food Controller was forthcoming, since no responsible man would undertake a post which it was proposed to make a mere impotent appendage of the Board of Trade. Even at that late date the Government seemed only to toy with the idea of action.

It is probable that for many months the great majority of the people of Britain had been convinced that a change was necessary. But the Government was slow to read the weather signs. With the conservatism that a long term of power engenders, its chief members found some difficulty in envisaging an alternative Ministry. They were patriotic men, who earnestly desired their country's victory, and they feared that Cabinet changes and resignations would weaken the strength of the nation and the confidence of the Allies. Hence, when the blow came, there was a tendency to attribute it solely to a malign conspiracy and a calumnious press. Conspiracy and press campaign there were, but it is impossible to believe that in the crisis of such a war any Government could have been driven from office by backstair intrigues alone or by the most skilful newspaper cabal. The

press which criticized owed its effect solely to the fact that it echoed what was in most men's minds. Mr. Asquith's Government fell because the mass of the people had come to believe, rightly or wrongly, that it was not the kind of administration to beat the enemy.

The details of the story may be briefly summarized, for though among so many great events they have little importance, yet they cast an interesting light on certain protagonists of the larger drama. Mr. Lloyd George, ever since in the preceding summer he had succeeded Lord Kitchener at the War Office, had been restless and uncomfortable. Sir William Robertson, when he became Chief of the Imperial General Staff, had insisted on a definition of his powers, and the agreement then reached was binding upon Lord Kitchener's successor. Mr. Lloyd George found himself a secondary figure at the War Office; certain indiscretions during a visit to France that autumn had made him deeply suspect by both the British and the French generals; in the Cabinet, too, it appeared as if his influence was on the wane. His prestige, still high with the public at large, had sunk low in official and ministerial circles. Apart from the personal question, he was honestly convinced that the war was being ill managed both by the generals in the field and the statesmen at home, and longed to infuse into its conduct a fierier purpose. At the time he had no close political ally except Mr. Churchill, who was out of office and somewhat under a cloud. Casting about for help, he bethought himself of the Unionist leader in the Commons, Mr. Bonar Law, and of an intimate friend of that leader, a young Canadian member of Parliament, Sir Maxwell Aitken.

Mr. Bonar Law was at the moment a tired and anxious man, and a controversy with some of his own followers, over a bill authorizing the sale of enemy property in West Africa, had seriously troubled him, and predisposed him to think that the existing arrangement was not the best conceivable. Mr. Lloyd George's scheme was for a very small War Committee of three members, of which the Prime Minister should not be one—a scheme not devised, as might appear at first sight, to compel Mr. Asquith's resignation, but a quite sincere attempt to get the actual direction of the war into more vigorous hands. Mr. Bonar Law, whose simplicity was as great as his probity and patriotism, believed that Mr. Asquith might fairly accept it; but the Prime Minister, while agreeing to the small War Committee, not unnaturally refused thus to divest himself of the main duty of leadership.

On Friday, 1st December, two newspapers in Mr. Lloyd George's confidence published a guarded account of the controversy, and next day the journals of Lord Northcliffe, who was now made privy to the enterprise, informed the world that Mr. Lloyd George was on the point of resignation. On Sunday, 3rd December, Mr. Bonar Law called a meeting of the Unionist leaders, and to his surprise found that they did not regard Mr. Lloyd George's departure from the Government as an unmixed misfortune. They were anxious that Mr. Asquith should resign as a tactical measure, and in order that he might reconstruct with a free hand they were prepared at the same time to tender their own resignations; but it was clear that they hoped that the new Cabinet would not include Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Bonar Law, whose motive was not to get rid of Mr. Asquith but to retain the great talents of the Secretary for War, visited the Prime Minister that afternoon and urged a settlement. To this the latter agreed, consenting not to be a member of the War Committee, provided he had effective control over its decisions.

But to Mr. Lloyd George and those in his full confidence—who at this time were only Sir Maxwell Aitken and Sir Edward Carson—such a settlement was not sufficient. They were resolved that Mr. Asquith's supremacy should be purely titular. On the morning of Monday, 4th December, the *Times* printed a leading article describing the arrangement, and insisting that the Prime Minister had to all intents abdicated from the control of the war. This move had an instantaneous effect. The Liberal Ministers rose in arms, and Mr. Asquith was compelled to revise his agreement of the Sunday and insist that he must be permanent president of the War Committee. Mr. Lloyd George had therefore to burn his boats, and on the Tuesday announced his resignation. That same day the Prime Minister was visited by various Unionist colleagues, who angrily dissociated themselves from any partnership in the manœuvre of the Secretary for War.

Mr. Asquith now took a step which seemed to be amply justified, but which in truth was fatal to his fortunes. He himself tendered his resignation. Counting on the support of the bulk of the Liberal and Unionist parties, he argued that it would be impossible for his malcontent colleague to form a Government. Fate seemed to have delivered Mr. Lloyd George into his hands. The King sent for Mr. Bonar Law, who, after taking a day and a night to think over it, declared himself unable to construct an administration, and advised his Majesty to summon Mr. Lloyd George. Mr. Lloyd

George was accordingly sent for, and on the evening of 7th December kissed hands as Prime Minister.

He had played a daring game with consummate coolness and courage, and he believed that he had the people of the country behind him. But for the moment his first need was the Unionist party if he was to form any kind of presentable Government. Mr. Balfour was ill in bed; he had consequently had no part in the hectic negotiations of the past week, and was imperfectly informed about the details. When the Foreign Office was pressed upon him by Mr. Bonar Law as a patriotic duty he consented, and his adherence brought in the rest of the Unionist statesmen. The latter insisted, however, that Mr. Churchill should not be given office, a condition at which the new Prime Minister did not cavil. Mr. Lloyd George's first task was to appoint a War Cabinet. He called to it Lord Milner and Mr. Arthur Henderson as Ministers without portfolios; Lord Curzon, the new President of the Council; and Mr. Bonar Law, the new Chancellor of the Exchequer; while he himself acted as its chairman. This body of five was entrusted with all matters pertaining to the conduct of the war. Sir Edward Carson became First Lord of the Admiralty, and Lord Derby Secretary for War. Since the ordinary political material was limited, some bold experiments were made, experts with little or no parliamentary experience being brought to special departments—Sir Albert Stanley to the Board of Trade, Mr. H. A. L. Fisher to the Education Office, Sir Joseph Maclay to the new Shipping Department, Mr. Prothero to the Board of Agriculture, and Sir Hardman Lever to the Treasury as Financial Secretary. The posts in the new Ministry were roughly divided between Liberal and Labour members and Unionists. All the Liberal Cabinet Ministers followed the late Prime Minister into retirement; but at a party meeting on 13th December, under the direction of Mr. Asquith, they pledged themselves to give Mr. Lloyd George's administration a fair trial.

The fate of Mr. Asquith's Government will, it is probable, be for future historians something of a landmark in the political history of Britain. It marked, some have argued, the end of the pre-eminence of a school of thought which had flourished since the fat days of the Victorian era; a school which had done good service in its day, and which contained many elements of permanent worth, but which had been invested by its votaries with a Sinaitic sanction that no poor creed of mortal statecraft could long sustain. These matters lie outside the province of a historian of the war. But, since contemporary public opinion is within that province,

we may briefly inquire why a Government so solidly buttressed should suffer such a sudden eclipse. Whatever be our view of the necessity of the change of Ministers, we can admit that the manner of it was ungracious. The Prime Minister and the Foreign Secretary, who had laboured long and hard in the service of their country, retired to the accompaniment of much coarse abuse from a section of the press. As a race we are magnanimous, and not careless of the decencies. Whence came this lapse from our normal practice? Whence sprang the nearly universal conviction that horses must be swopped, however turbulent the stream?

It is to be observed, in the first place, that a change of leaders in a long struggle is the usual practice of nations. In most of the great wars of history the men, both soldiers and civilians, who began the struggle have not been those who concluded it. Lincoln was the exception, not the rule. Since August 1914, in all the belligerent States there had been much shuffling of cabinets and commands. Germany had seen three successive chiefs of the General Staff, and if the same Imperial Chancellor continued in office, it was only because he was removed beyond the reach of the mutations of the popular will. In Russia the leadership of the armies had already passed from the Grand Duke Nicholas to Alexeiev; the Premiership from Goremykin to Stürmer, and from Stürmer to Trepov. Italy had changed her Premier once; France had had several Cabinet reconstructions, and had now a new Commander-in-Chief. Among departmental heads in every country there had been a continuous and bewildering exchange; France had had three Ministers of War, Britain two, and Russia three—to take the office where change was *prima facie* least desirable. The British Prime Minister and the British Foreign Secretary seemed almost the only stable things in a shifting world.

That new leaders should be demanded in a strife which affects national existence is as inevitable as the changes of the seasons. The problems of the second and third stages of a war are not those of the first stage, and the man who has borne the heat and burden of the morning will be apt to bring a stale body and a wearied brain to the tasks of the afternoon. Few leaders are so elastic in mind that, having given all their strength to one set of problems, they can turn with unabated vigour to new needs and new conditions. The odds are that the man who has shown himself an adept in a patient defensive will not be the man to lead a swift advance. Again, every war is a packet of surprises, and the early stages must be strewn with failures. History may rate the general who has

endured and learned the lessons of failure far higher than his successor who reaps the fruit of that learning, but contemporaries have not this just perspective. The nature of the popular mind must be reckoned with, and that mind will turn eagerly from one who is identified with dark days of stress to one who comes to his task with a more cheerful record. The nation, which bears the brunt of the struggle, must be able to view its leaders with hopefulness, and in all novelty there is hope.

The demand for change is likely to be the stronger in the case of a civilian Government, if its members entered upon the war already weary from long years of office, and if one of their claims to fame has been skill in the common type of politics, a type which has been wrecked by the new era and has left in the popular mind a strong distaste. This was very notably the case with Mr. Asquith and some of his chief supporters. The Liberal Government had been continuously in office since the close of 1905; it had gone through three General Elections; it had been engaged in many bitter disputes, and had weathered more than one serious crisis. After eight such difficult years there must inevitably have followed some decline in the elasticity and vigour of those who were responsible in such stormy waters for the ship of state. Again, those eight years had been years of conspicuous success in party management. The art of directing the House of Commons had rarely been carried higher than by Mr. Asquith, and great was the skill of those lieutenants who cultivated and manipulated the caucus. But after three months of war the caucus was futile, and the party catchwords meaningless. More, there was growing up in the popular mind a dislike of the whole business, a suspicion, not wholly baseless, that Britain owed some of her misfortunes to this particular *expertise*. The skill, so loudly acclaimed a year before both by those who benefited and by those who suffered from it, seemed now not only useless but sinister. The dapper political expert was as much in the shadow as the champion faro player in a western American township which has been visited by a religious revival. It was no question of political creed. The same fate would have overtaken a Conservative or a Labour Government if it had been in power before the war. It was the reaction of the plain man, plunged into a desperate crisis, against the sleek standards of a vanished world.

Lastly, there was that in the temperament and talents of the Prime Minister himself upon which the nation had begun to look coldly. His great ability no man could question—his oratorical

gifts, his diplomatic skill, his shrewd and closely reasoning mind. Not less conspicuous were his endowments of character. He had admirable nerve and courage, and as a consequence he was the most loyal of colleagues, for he never shrank from accepting the burden of his own mistakes and those of his subordinates. He was incapable of intrigue in any form. He had true personal dignity, caring little for either abuse or praise, and shunning the arts of self-advertisement. But he left on the ordinary mind the impression that he thought more of argument than of action. To most men he was identified with a political maxim enjoining delay, and in many matters his Ministry had been too late. He was a man of the old régime, devoted to traditional methods and historic watchwords; his intellect was lucid and orderly, but in no way original; and the nation asked whether such a man could have that eye for the "instant need of things" which an unprecedented crisis demands. It seemed to his critics impossible to expect the unresting activity and the bold origination which the situation required from one whose habits of thought and deed were cast in the more leisurely mould of the elder school of statesmen.

When a people judges there is usually reason in its verdict, and it is idle to argue that Mr. Asquith was a perfect, or perhaps the best available, leader in war time. But history will not let his remarkable services go unacclaimed. In August 1914 he had led the nation in the path of honour and political wisdom. No man had stated more eloquently the essential principles for which Britain fought, or held to them more resolutely. In a tangle of conflicting policies he had kept always in the mind of the public the vital point of the quarrel with the Central Powers. And if his optimism had at times an unfortunate effect, there can be little doubt that his steady nerve, coolness, and patience did much to keep an even temper in the people during days of disappointment and darkness. He departed from office with the dignity that he had worn in power, and he behaved throughout in all respects not as a party chief but as a patriot. History will see in him a great debater, a great parliamentarian, a great public servant, and a great gentleman.

CHAPTER LXX.

THE GERMAN MANŒUVRES FOR PEACE.

November 9, 1916–*February* 1, 1917.

Origin of German Peace Offer—The Imperial Chancellor's Speech of 12th December —The German Note—The Answer of the Allies—President Wilson's Note—Germany declares unrestricted Submarine Warfare.

THROUGHOUT the autumn of 1916 the German troops and people were encouraged with hints of peace by Christmastide. The Imperial Chancellor, in his speech of 9th November, spoke smooth words, and the mind of the nation was prepared for his declaration of 12th December in the Reichstag, and the dispatch on the same day of a summons to the enemies of Germany to enter into negotiations. Before we deal with these overtures, it is necessary to consider the state of mind which prompted them.

Germany's diplomacy had never been distinguished by subtlety. He who ran might read as in large type the motives of her numerous pronunciamentos. The causes which she wished the world to believe to have guided her action were always explicitly stated, but the true reasons could be observed sticking out like the stuffing from a damaged marionette. In the present case she adopted the *rôle* of a generous conqueror. She had won in every field, but out of the fullness of her strength and the greatness of her soul she would condescend to treat with beaten antagonists for the sake of humanity and the world's future. It is safe to say that the pose deceived no one except the more ignorant and credulous classes of her own people. She had begun the campaign with loud talk about the rights of Germany founded on a higher *kultur*, and with proclamations of her " will to power." When her great offensive was foiled—but not till then—she discovered that she had always been waging a defensive war, and asked but the security of her frontiers and the opportunity of peaceful development. But her own spoken and written words, and, above all, her deeds,

remained as damning evidence against her. If she abated one jot of her earlier pretensions, it was due not to a change of heart but to a change of circumstance.

Her first motive was prudential. The tide of her success had long ago begun to turn, and she wished to arrest the ebb while yet there was time. Deeply embarrassed as she was, she still occupied much foreign territory, which might be used in bargaining. The Battle of the Somme had shown her that her military machine was being strained to breaking-point; once it broke all would be over, and at any cost that catastrophe must be averted. She had seen the Allied strength in the field grow to a pitch which she had believed impossible; but arguing from her own case, she considered that the effort had only been made at the expense of colossal sufferings, and that behind the Allies' resolution lay a profound war weariness. An offer of negotiations might, she thought, be welcomed by the masses in the Allied nations, and forced by them on their governments. Once the belligerents consented to treat, she believed that she had certain advantages in any conference. She had much to give up which she could not hold, and her renunciation might win her the things which she considered vital to her future. Moreover, if her opponents were entangled in discussions, there was a chance of breaking up their unity and shifting the argument to minor issues. Her peril lay in the silence of her enemies. So long as they maintained their deadly concurrence on the broad principle that Germany had shattered the world's peace, and must be prevented from doing it again, her protestations would not move them, and her bluster would only steel their hearts. But once let them sit down to argue on ways and means, and they would beyond doubt reveal divergences of purpose. It was a matter of life and death to her that the rift should appear in the Allied lute before she had suffered a final catastrophe.

Her overtures were made also with an eye to the neutral states, notably America. Their sufferings during the war had been grave, and the longer it lasted the more difficult became their position. They hungered for peace, and would not scrutinize Germany's motives with the acumen of her actual foes. It might be assumed that they would look at the war map, to which the Imperial Chancellor so often turned, with eyes more readily dazzled than those who had won during two years of conflict a truer sense of the military value of territorial conquests. They might take Germany's claims at their face value, and be really impressed by

her apparent magnanimity. In any case they would not be likely to welcome a summary bolting of the door against negotiations. If the Allies declined the offer, neutral opinion might force them to reconsider their refusal, and, if they persisted, be seriously alienated from them. To win the goodwill of neutrals, even if nothing more were gained, would be an immense advantage for Germany, for there lay her one hope of reconstruction.

Finally, she was thinking of her own people. They had at first been buoyed up with illusory dreams of a settlement dictated to a conquered earth. Then, with accustomed docility, they had accepted the view that Germany was waging a war of self-defence, and fought for virtue and peace against the mailed wickedness of the world. God had been good to her, and the malice of her enemies had been confounded; but, to show the cleanness of her soul, she was willing to forget and forgive, and to forgo her just revenge for the sake of a quiet life. If proof were needed that the guilt of beginning the war did not lie on Germany, here, surely, was the last word; for, though victorious, she refused to take the responsibility of continuing it. The Emperor was a prince of peace as well as a lord of battles.

Action which proceeds from many mixed and conflicting motives is likely to be a blunder. The German peace offer was no exception to the rule. To impress the German people, it had to be couched in a tone of high rhetoric and conscious superiority; to win its way with neutrals, it must emphasize Germany's past triumphs and present magnanimity. But these arguments would not appeal to the Allies, who denied the assumptions, so for their benefit something was added in the nature of a threat. The mere fact that the attempt was made at all implied a confession of weakness, when Germany's previous record was remembered. The consequence was that the impression left on men's minds by the German overtures was one of maladroitness carried to the pitch of genius. Of all combinations of manner, the least likely to impress is a blend of truculence and sentimentality, of cajolery and bluster.

The antecedents of the step may be briefly summarized. As early as September 1916 the Imperial Chancellor was considering how President Wilson might be induced to offer mediation, if possible before the Presidential election in the beginning of November, and the army chiefs, somewhat sceptically, approved the notion. Count Bernstorff at Washington was encouraging; he believed that "peaceful money-making is the sole life and interest of the

American." In October Baron Burian, the Austrian Premier, came forward with the proposal that the Teutonic League should itself take the first action and make a direct offer to the enemy. There was some private discussion about minimum terms, from which it appeared that Austria and Germany were well agreed that the concessions must be trifling. Even Bethmann-Hollweg, who was the most moderate, insisted upon the annexation of Liége and the mines of Briey, and the evacuation of French territory only after the payment of a war indemnity. About the end of the month the Emperor indited a letter to his Chancellor. Dismayed at the obstinacy of his enemies, he declared that they were obsessed by "war psychosis" from which they possessed no liberator. "Making a peace proposal," he wrote, "is an act necessary to deliver the world, including neutrals, from obsession. For such an act a ruler is wanted with a conscience, who feels responsible towards God, and who has a heart for his own and hostile peoples. A ruler is wanted who is inspired by a desire to deliver the world from sufferings without minding possible wrong interpretations of his act. I have the courage to do it. I will venture it, relying upon God." Hindenburg and Ludendorff concurred without much enthusiasm. Their main desire was the requisitioning of the whole of Germany's man-power, and the Auxiliary Service Bill, which satisfied part of their demands, became law on 2nd December. The Majority Socialists, who, under Scheidemann, had now all but cut loose from the Minority and become a Government party, were sounded, and promised their support. The fall of Bucharest on 6th December gave the cue for the entry of the peacemaker. It was unfortunate for his purpose that Nivelle chose the same time to inflict a signal defeat at Verdun on the peacemaker's all-conquering legions.

On 12th December the Imperial Chancellor made a speech in the Reichstag, in which he announced that, by the Emperor's orders, he had that morning proposed to the hostile Powers to enter into peace negotiations, in an invitation submitted through the representatives of neutral states. His peroration gave the key to his motives, for it struck all the different notes :—

"In August 1914 our enemies challenged the superiority of power in a world war. To-day we raise the question of peace, which is a question of humanity. We expect that the answer of our enemies will be given with that sereneness of mind which is guaranteed to us by our external and internal strength and by our clear conscience. If our enemies decline and wish to take upon themselves the world's

heavy burden of all those terrors which thereafter will follow, then, even in the least and smallest homes, every German heart will burn in sacred wrath against our enemies, who are unwilling to stop human slaughter in order that their plans of conquest and annihilation may continue. In a fateful hour we took a fateful decision. God will be judge. We can proceed upon our way without fear or resentment. We are ready for war and we are ready for peace."

The Note began by emphasizing the "indestructible strength" of Germany and her allies. It explained that this strength was used only to defend their existence and the freedom of their natural development, and all their many victories had not changed this purpose. They asked for peace negotiations at which they would bring forward proposals "which would aim at assuring the existence, honour, and free development of their peoples, and would be such as to serve as a basis for the restoration of a lasting peace." No hint was given of what such proposals would be.

The document was cunningly worded as to one part of its purpose—to impress the people of the Fatherland. It was less skilful in regard to its effect upon neutrals, for it emphasized as facts one baseless assumption—that Germany was already the victor; and one falsehood—that the Allies were responsible for the origin of the war. A majority in the neutral world was probably indisposed to admit the first, and was almost certainly inclined to deny the second. As for the Allies themselves, the net was spread too brazenly in their sight. An invitation to a conference based on such premises would, if accepted, put them wholly in a false position. It revealed the lines of the German argument—lines which admitted of no conceivable agreement. It was an empty offer, not specifying the terms which Germany was willing to accept, but leaving them to be deduced from the arrogance of the peacemaker's language. For the Allies to consider the thing for one moment would have been a waste of time in the serious business of war.

The design was too obvious to deceive any but the slenderest and most perverse section of Allied opinion. It was promptly exposed in France by M. Briand, in Italy by Baron Sonnino, in Russia by M. Pokrovsky, and in Japan by Viscount Motono, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. On 30th December the French Government communicated to the United States Ambassador in Paris a formal answer, signed by Russia, France, Great Britain, Japan, Italy, Serbia, Belgium, Montenegro, Portugal, and Rumania. The document expounded most temperately but most

clearly the illusory nature of Germany's proposal. There could be no peace without retribution, reparation, and guarantees for the future; of these the German Note made no mention, and its truculence precluded any hope of assent to them. The overtures were merely an attempt to "justify in advance in the eyes of the world" some new series of crimes.

"Once again the Allies declare that no peace is possible so long as they have not secured reparation for violated rights and liberties, recognition of the principle of nationalities, and of the free existence of small states; so long as they have not brought about a settlement calculated to end, once and for all, causes which have constituted a perpetual menace to the nations, and to afford the only effective guarantees for the future security of the world."

About the same time the German press took to publishing documents which showed that the Allies were right in their diagnosis of German tactics. One was the secret memorandum adopted six months before by the Council of the German Navy League, which, in sober, business-like language, laid down the minimum that Germany required as the result of war—a minimum which included the annexation of Belgium. More important still was the article published on New Year's Eve in the *Frankfurter Zeitung* by Professor Meinecke of Freiburg on the development of Germany's war plans. The historian admitted what the publicists had denied. Germany had entered upon a contest which only in the political sense could be called defensive; from the military point of view it was meant to be a "knock-out" war. It had failed at the Marne, and the later phase, the war of attrition, had failed before the Somme began. She had come to the conclusion that victory in the full sense was impossible. She therefore favoured "the idea that the sacrifices demanded by the continuation of the war can no longer bear any relation to the military results which can still be expected, and that it is statesmanlike, intelligent, and wise to abandon the intention of destruction, which after all does not lead to destruction, and to seek a reasonable compromise." It was the truth. Having failed to destroy in the field, Germany sought to bargain; but the candour of the historian gave the lie to the rhetoric of the Imperial Chancellor and his master.

Close on the heels of the German overture came another Note of a very different kind. Mr. Wilson was now in the position which has been described as the most powerful enjoyed by any of the rulers of the world—that of an American President elected

for a second term of office. The nation had affirmed by a great majority its confidence in him, and since, by the unwritten constitutional law of the United States, a third consecutive term as President is inadmissible, he was free from those considerations of tactics which must to some extent embarrass the most independent of party leaders. He was now able, if he so willed, to reopen the question of America's neutrality, subject always to the restriction that as a constitutional ruler he must carry the nation along with him.

The election had been fought on narrow issues. Both parties had talked assiduously of the necessity of defending American rights against violation from any quarter; but Mr. Hughes, the Republican candidate, had contented himself with a general criticism of Mr. Wilson's policy towards Mexico and Germany, and had taken no clear line on the question of intervention. There were German sympathizers, as there were strong advocates of the Allies, in the ranks of both sides. Mr. Wilson undoubtedly received the bulk of his popular support because he had kept America out of the war. Therefore his mandate was to uphold so far as was possible the existing status of peace. But, at the same time, in his election campaign he had kept to the fore a kind of internationalism. The policy of the "League to Enforce Peace" had been part of his programme, and this scheme for compulsory arbitration among the Powers of the world, and the re-establishment of a definite code of public right, meant really a breach with the traditional foreign policy of America. It was clear that, in Mr. Wilson's view, no nation, however powerful, could live for itself alone. In the speech in which he accepted his re-nomination he had declared: "No nation can any longer remain neutral as against any wilful destruction of the peace of the world. . . . The nations of the world must unite in joint guarantee that whatever is done to disturb the whole world's life must first be tested in the court of the whole world's opinion before it is attempted." Mr. Wilson was therefore elected not merely to keep America at peace; he was given a mandate for international reform; and the two missions might well prove incompatible.

When, after his victory, he looked round the horizon, he saw many clouds that promised storm. The darkest was the German submarine campaign. Germany, in spite of her pledge to Washington, was busily engaged in those very acts which in the preceding April he had unsparingly condemned. He saw, moreover, that the lot of neutrals was rapidly becoming unendurable, and that

with Germany in her present temper the most pacific among them might be forced into a war of self-defence. Accordingly, he felt obliged to clear up the situation by asking the belligerents to define their real aims. Such a step had in the main a tactical purpose. Elected as a peace-President, he must be able to justify himself fully to his people if he were forced into a course which was not pacific. He had formulated an international policy with general assent. The war aims of the belligerents must be clearly shown to be in accord with, or antagonistic to, that policy before the United States could take sides. He felt that the compulsion of events was forcing him in the direction of war. He wished to point this out to the world, for it might have a restraining and sobering effect on the combatants. If he failed in that aim, he would at least prepare the mind of America for the inevitable.

The Note, which was presented on 18th December, had no relation to the German peace proposals. It was written, in part at any rate, before the Emperor's move, and, as we have seen, was a necessary consequence of Mr. Wilson's new position. Its construction and wording were devised with skill to serve the President's purpose. It stated that the published aim of both sets of belligerents appeared to be the same, and it defined these aims in a manner consonant with America's declared views.

> " Each side desires to make the rights and privileges of weak peoples and small States as secure against aggression and denial in the future as the rights and privileges of the great and powerful States now at war. Each wishes itself to be made secure in the future, along with all other nations and peoples, against the recurrence of wars like this, and against oppression and selfish interference of any kind. Each would be jealous of the formation of any more rival leagues to preserve an uncertain balance of power against multiplying suspicions ; but each is ready to consider the formation of a League of Nations to ensure peace and justice throughout the world."

It was an adroit move, for by defining the aims of the Allies, and crediting these aims also to the Central Powers, it brought the conduct of the latter—which from the first day of the war had been a flagrant denial of these aims—into bold relief. The Note went on to invite a comparison of views in detail, since on generalities all seemed to be in agreement. It pointed out that the prolongation of the war to an aimless exhaustion would endanger the whole future of civilization. " The President is not proposing peace," so ran the conclusion ; " he is not even offering mediation. He is merely proposing that soundings be taken in order

that we may learn, the neutral nations with the belligerents, how near the haven of peace may be for which all mankind longs with an intense and increasing longing."

The purpose of the Note was not at first detected among the Allied peoples. Small blame to them for their misapprehension! Combatants engaged in a struggle of life and death have no time to appreciate the finesse of a third party who stands outside the fray. Mr. Wilson's definition of Germany's war aims seemed to most people a misreading of the plain facts of the war, and of a thousand printed and spoken German declarations. His request to the Allies to formulate in detail their proposals seemed to be open to the same objection which Lincoln urged against those who clamoured for his plan of reconstruction before the North had won in the field. "I have laboriously endeavoured," Lincoln said in 1863, "to avoid that question ever since it first began to be mooted, and thus to avoid confusion and disturbance in our own councils." The Allied Governments judged more wisely. They saw Mr. Wilson's purpose. They realized that he was being forced towards a breach with Germany, and that he must make certain in his own mind and the mind of his people that the cause for which the Allies fought was consistent with American ideals. Accordingly they received his Note with a true appreciation of its meaning, and patiently and temperately set forth their answer.

That answer was one of the most notable documents that ever emanated from European chanceries. In the friendliest spirit it declined to set out the Allied war aims in detail, since these could not be formulated till the hour for negotiations arrived.

"But the civilized world knows that they imply, necessarily and first of all, the restoration of Belgium, Serbia, and Montenegro, with the compensation due to them; the evacuation of the invaded territories in France, in Russia, in Rumania, with just reparation; the reorganization of Europe, guaranteed by a stable régime and based at once on respect for nationalities and on the right to full security and liberty of economic development possessed by all peoples, small and great, and at the same time upon territorial conventions and international settlements such as to guarantee land and sea frontiers against unjustified attack; the restoration of provinces formerly torn from the Allies by force or against the wish of their inhabitants; the liberation of the Italians, as also of the Slavs, Rumanians, and Czecho-Slovaks from foreign domination; the setting free of the populations subject to the bloody tyranny of the Turks; and the turning out of Europe of the Ottoman Empire as decidedly foreign to Western civilization."

The Allies associated themselves whole-heartedly with the projects of a League of the Nations, but pointed out that before such a league could come into being the present dispute must be settled. The malignant ill in the body-politic must be cured before a regimen could be adopted to ensure its future health. At the same time the Belgian Government submitted an answer to the American President, pointing the moral from the case of their own country. "The barbarous manner in which the German Government has treated and still treats the Belgian nation does not allow us to presume that Germany will trouble in the future about guaranteeing the rights of weak nations which she has never ceased to trample underfoot since the moment when the war, let loose by her, began to decimate Europe."

The American Note met with no response from Germany. Chagrined by her failure to produce dissension among the Allies, and profoundly embarrassed by President Wilson's overtures, she contented herself with an angry declaration to neutrals, a mixture of bad logic and bad history, and a string of denials of what she had in her palmier days admitted and gloried in. This came on January 11, 1917, and the next day the Emperor issued a proclamation to make certain that his tactics, if they had failed with the enemy, should at least have some success with the German people.

"Our enemies have dropped the mask. After refusing with scorn and hypocritical words of love for peace and humanity our honest peace offer, they now, in their reply to the United States, have gone beyond that and admitted their lust for conquest, the baseness of which is further enhanced by their calumnious assertions. Their aim is the crushing of Germany, the dismemberment of the Powers allied to us, and the enslavement of the freedom of Europe and the seas under the same yoke that Greece, with gnashing teeth, is now enduring. . . . Burning indignation and holy wrath will redouble the strength of every German man and woman, whether it is devoted to fighting, work, or suffering."

The sympathetic reception of the Allied reply in America proved that the President had read aright the temper of his people, and that the Allied Governments had been correct in their interpretation of the meaning of his message. Britain and the United States were alike in one thing—both had regarded themselves in old days as extra-European Powers. But the logic of circumstances had brought one into the family of Europe, and the same force seemed about to bring the other into a fellowship which was not

of Europe alone, but of the civilized world. On January 22, 1917, the President, deeming that the words of his Note needed amplification, delivered a remarkable address to the Senate, in which he unfolded his programme for a League of Peace. Such a league could only come into being after the present war was over, and on the nature of the settlement depended America's support to guarantee the future. He outlined the terms which he would consider a satisfactory foundation for the new world. It must be a peace without victory—that is, a peace not dictated by a victor to a loser, leaving a heritage of resentment. It must be founded on the recognition of the equal rights of all States, great and small. It must be based on the principle that a people was not a chattel to hand from one sovereignty to another, but that governments only derived that power from the consent of the governed. It must assure, as far as possible, a direct outlet for every great people to the highways of the sea. The ocean must be free in practically all circumstances for the use of mankind, and armaments, both military and naval, must be limited.

From no one of these conditions were the Allies disposed to dissent. By "peace without victory" it was clear from the context that Mr. Wilson meant peace without that destruction and dismemberment of Germany which the Allies had expressly repudiated. In another sense there could be no peace without victory—victory over the mad absolutism and military pride of the Central Powers. Unless that were crushed to the earth, no sanctions, no guarantees, no system of treaties, no rectification of frontiers, no League of Peace, would endure for a decade; for it had long ago proclaimed itself above international law and a flouter of all rights, however sacred. If it were decisively beaten, the terms of peace mattered less, for the secular enemy of all peace would have disappeared. Victory, the right kind of victory, was, on Mr. Wilson's own argument, the essential preliminary of any lasting settlement.

There come moments in the middle of any great toil when it is desirable for the good of the toiler's soul that he straighten his back and look round. *Respice finem* is the best traveller's maxim. Without a constant remembrance of the goal the pilgrim may find the rough places impassable, and will be prone to stray from the road. The value of Mr. Wilson's intervention was that it caused the Allies to reflect upon the deeper purpose of the war. It emphasized the essential idealism of their cause, which had become dim in many minds from that preoccupation with detail

which a desperate contest induces. It was well that it should be so, for events were in train in Russia and in America itself which were to change the whole complexion of the struggle, and set the ideal aspect foremost in the eye of the world. For the remainder of the war the question of ultimate aims was to be canvassed unceasingly, and every Ally had to examine herself and discover her soul in the quest for a common denominator of purpose.

Germany, too, discovered herself, and that speedily. The "terrors" which the Imperial Chancellor had proclaimed in his speech of 12th December were at once put into motion. In the previous August Hindenburg and Ludendorff had opposed unrestricted submarine warfare on the ground that the time was not ripe for it. They changed their views after the Rumanian victory, when it became certain that no European neutral was likely to enter the lists against them. The price, as they frankly recognized, was war with the United States, but they calculated that America could not put in the field more than five or six divisions during the first year, and they were clear that the campaign would have a decisive effect long before America could send armies on the grand scale. They had small hope of results from the peace offer, but they consented to postpone a decision until it had been given a fair trial. On 23rd December Hindenburg told the Chancellor that in his view unrestricted submarine warfare was now essential in view of Germany's dangerous economic and military position, and at the conference on January 9, 1917, the Emperor and the Chancellor accepted the view. The decision was, strangely enough, combined with the drafting, on 29th January, of Germany's peace terms for dispatch to Mr. Wilson. These included the renunciation of the part of upper Alsace then occupied by France, the return of the German colonies, a strategic rectification of the French and Russian frontiers, and the restoration of Belgium subject to guarantees. But this peace overture was obscured by the momentous declaration of the new submarine policy. For, on 31st January, the German Government announced that from 1st February all sea traffic within certain zones adjoining Britain, France, and Italy, and in the Eastern Mediterranean, would, "without further notice, be prevented by all weapons." This meant that German submarines would sink at sight within these areas all vessels, whether neutral or belligerent. The causes alleged were the illegality of the Allied blockade, and the Allied rejection of Germany's peace offer. But Bethmann-Hollweg in the Reichstag set forth

another reason. He had always been in favour, he said, of ruthless methods of submarine warfare, if they were best calculated to lead to a swift victory. "Last autumn the time was not yet ripe, but to-day the moment has come when with the greatest prospect of success we can undertake this enterprise. We must, therefore, delay no longer." The Imperial Chancellor was a maladroit diplomat, who occasionally blundered into speaking the truth.

CHAPTER LXXI.

THE CLEARING OF SINAI AND THE FALL OF BAGDAD.

August 9, 1916–*March* 11, 1917.

Position of Turkey—The Sinai Desert crossed—Actions of Magdhaba and Rafa—End of Senussi Campaign—Sir Stanley Maude—His Capture of Kut—Fall of Bagdad.

(*Maps*, pp. 498, 374.)

We left the story of the war against Turkey at the point when, in August 1916, Sir Archibald Murray's forces in Egypt had successfully repelled the Turkish offensive at Romani, while Sir Stanley Maude's Army of Mesopotamia was slowly perfecting its preparations for the recovery of Kut. Yudenitch in the Caucasus, with Erzerum, Trebizond, and Erzhingian in his possession, was detaining at least half of Turkey's total fighting strength, and Baratov with his small column was hanging somewhat precariously on the western borders of Persia. For the moment Turkey was safe, but her security was not solidly founded. She owed it rather to her opponent's mistakes than to her own inherent strength. Her fifty odd divisions were widely scattered—half against Yudenitch, five or six in Galicia and the Dobrudja, three on the Tigris, five in Syria, and detachments on the Persian frontier, at Gallipoli, and on the Struma. If her enemies could combine, if Maude and Yudenitch could join hands, and Murray press northward through Syria, there was a chance of that decisive defeat in the field which would put her out of action. The Allies had blundered grievously; but they had learned much, and they had great assets. They had in Egypt an ideal offensive base, the advantages of which were only now being realized, and they had against them an enemy whose military strength had been heavily depleted by costly actions and weakened by every kind of internal distraction and misgovernment.

The distinction between the Western and Eastern schools of strategy among the Allies was largely fictitious. No sane men

denied the necessity of making the chief effort on the Western front, and few but admitted that victory was no less necessary in the East. Germany must be beaten in the theatre where her main forces were engaged, but it was not less important to cut her off from the Eastern extension on which for a generation she had set her heart. Turkey, it was clear, must be brought to such a pass in the field that she would have to submit to the drastic terms of the Allies. Her policy had been thoroughly Germanized. She had flung off all her old treaty obligations and claimed the status of one of the Great Powers of Europe.* She had lost most of her shadowy hegemony over Islam, for the Grand Sherif of Mecca, who at the close of 1916 assumed the title of King of the Hedjaz, had called the faithful to witness that the so-called Khalifs of Constantinople had at all times been puppets in the hands of some kind of janissary, and that the new janissaries from Prussia were conspicuously unsuited to be the guardians of the mysteries of the Faith. Turkey had thrown down a challenge which could only be answered by her destruction as an empire and as a suzerain Power.

There was every military reason for an energetic campaign against her, for her immobilization would have immediate effects upon that Achilles heel of Prussianism, its Austrian and Bulgarian allies. The political reasons were even stronger, for no war of liberation could suffer the anomaly of the Near East to go unreformed. The Turk had been so long the nominal ally of Britain that many had come to regard him with an affectionate toleration, as a man regards the occasional misdeeds of a faithful and spirited dog. That the Turkish peasant was brave, hardy, and uncomplaining was beyond doubt; that a considerable section of the old Turkish gentry had good manners, a picturesque air, and certain virtues not too common in the modern world, might be maintained with reason; but no sentimentalism could change the fact that the Turk and his kind had nowhere shown a trace of administrative genius or civic spirit, and that wherever he had set his foot he had blasted the land. His race was like the wind from the desert, which scorches and never fructifies or blesses. Turkey was a military Power, competent only when in the saddle, with the sword drawn; she had no gifts for the arts of peace, and no power to rebuild when she had broken down. Her history was, in the words of the Allied statement of war aims to President Wilson, a "bloody

* On January 1, 1917, she finally denounced the Treaty of Paris of 1856, and the Treaty of Berlin of 1878, and at the same time abolished the autonomous organization of the Lebanon province.

tyranny." The old Turk was a blunderer with certain redeeming qualities; the new Turk was no less a blunderer, but he had lost the qualities and adopted with easy grace the worst vices of his Prussian masters, whose creed was terribly akin to the root characteristics of his tribe.

Turkey's dominion embraced the ruins of the richest and most enlightened lands of the ancient world, the cradle of civilization and of the Christian faith. The old proud empires from New Rome to Bagdad were not destroyed by Islam. The rich Ommayad culture and Bagdad under the Caliphs were the achievement of the eldest sons of Islam, the Arabs, who gave light and leading to all North Africa and one-third of Asia. They were destroyed by the Turk. Under his kindly rule Bagdad became a city of hovels, and Mesopotamia a swamp and a sand dune. Persecutions, over-taxation, corruption, and incompetence characterized all the centuries of his régime. Since the war began he had shown his natural instincts by causing the death of the better part of a million Armenians, and, partly from fecklessness and partly from malice, letting half the population of the Lebanon die of famine. The world had been very patient with him, but the cup of his offences now overflowed. So monstrous an anachronism as the Turkish Empire must be removed from the family of the nations, and the Turk must return to the part for which he had always been destined—that of the ruler of a tribal province.

Through the autumn months of 1916 Sir Archibald Murray was engaged in pushing the new railway eastward from Kantara across the Sinai desert. This kind of warfare was much the same as the old Sudan campaigns. The condition was that before each move large quantities of supplies had to be collected at an advanced base. An action was then fought to clear the front, and after it came a pause while the railway was carried forward and a new reserve of supplies accumulated. The task was harder than in the Sudan, for there was no river to give water. In that thirsty land, after the Katia basin was left behind, water was almost non-existent, and supplies had to be brought by rail in tank trucks till a pipe line could be laid. The work entailed was very great, but the organization of camel transport gradually bridged the gap between the railhead and the front. The soldiers in the French and Flanders trenches were inclined to look upon the Egyptian campaign as the longed-for war of movement. Movement there was, but it was less the movement of cavalry riding for an objective than the slow prog-

ress of engineers daily completing a small section of line in the sun-baked sand. Sir Archibald Murray has described the situation :—

"The main factor—without which all liberty of action and any tactical victory would have been nugatory—was work, intense and unremitting. To regain the peninsula, the true frontier of Egypt, hundreds of miles of water piping had been laid ; filters capable of supplying 1,500,000 gallons of water a day, and reservoirs, had been installed ; and tons of stone transported from distant quarries. Kantara had been transformed from a small canal village into an important railway and water terminus, with wharves and cranes and a railway ferry ; and the desert, till then almost destitute of human habitation, showed the successive marks of our advance in the shape of strong positions firmly entrenched and protected by hundreds of miles of barbed wire, of standing camps where troops could shelter in comfortable huts, of tanks and reservoirs, of railway stations and sidings, of aerodromes and of signal stations and wireless installations—by all of which the desert was subdued and made habitable, and adequate lines of communication established between the advancing troops and their ever-receding base. Moreover, not only had British troops laboured incessantly during the summer and autumn, but the body of organized native labour had grown. The necessity of combining the protection and maintenance, including the important work of sanitation, of this large force of workers, British and native, with that progress on the railway roads and pipes which was vital to the success of any operation, put the severest strain upon all energies and resources. But the problem of feeding the workers without starving the work was solved by the goodwill and energy of all concerned."

The headquarters of the Egyptian Expeditionary Force under Sir Archibald Murray were now at Cairo, and the Eastern Force, with headquarters at Ismailia, was under Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Dobell, the conqueror of the Cameroons. Of this the spearhead was the Desert Column, consisting mainly of Australian, New Zealand, and British mounted troops and the Camel Corps, now under Lieutenant-General Sir Philip Chetwode, who had commanded the 2nd Cavalry Division on the French front. The immediate objective was El Arish, and during October and November much bombing work was done by the Royal Flying Corps, and there were various brilliant little cavalry reconnaissances. Between 13th and 17th October, for example, the enemy position on the steep hills at Maghara, sixty-five miles east of Ismailia, was successfully reconnoitred after two difficult night marches. Meantime the railway was creeping on. At the end of October it was four miles east of Bir el Abd, and by 26th November it had reached Mazar. The enemy's advanced position in front of El Arish and

Masaid covered all the water in the area, and it was necessary to accumulate large supplies at railhead in case the operation of dislodging him should prove a slow one.

By 20th December we were ready to strike, but the Turks did not await us. On the night of 19th December they evacuated the positions which they had so elaborately fortified. Their retreat was discovered by our airmen, and on the night of the 20th Australian and New Zealand mounted troops, supported by the Imperial Camel Corps, marched twenty miles, and reached El Arish at sunrise to find it empty. The Turkish garrison of 1,600 men had fallen back upon Magdhaba. Scottish troops entered El Arish some hours later, and the frontier town which for two years had been in the enemy's hands was now restored to Egypt. Mine-sweeping operations were at once begun in the roadstead, a pier was built, and by the 24th supply ships from Port Said had begun unloading stores. We had won the necessary advanced base for the coming major operations.

The next step was to "round up" the retreating garrison. At 12.45 a.m. on the morning of 23rd December a flying column took the road under Chauvel, and found the enemy at Magdhaba, twenty miles to the south-south-east, in a strong position on both banks of the Wadi el Arish. Then followed a very perfect little action. The Australian Light Horse and the New Zealand Mounted Rifles moved east of Magdhaba against the enemy's right flank and rear, while the Imperial Camel Corps attacked in front. The reserves, in order to prevent escape, swung round from the north-west. Shortly after noon the Turkish position was completely surrounded. The mirage, however, impeded the work of the horse-artillery batteries, and the entire absence of water made it clear that unless Magdhaba was carried soon the troops would have to be withdrawn. Chauvel, accordingly, was given orders to press the attack, and by four o'clock, after a bayonet charge by a Light Horse regiment, the place was won. Our casualties were twelve officers and 134 other ranks killed and wounded; we took 1,282 prisoners, four mountain guns, one machine gun, and over one thousand rifles.

Our airplanes reported that the enemy had entrenched himself at Magruntein, near Rafa, thirty miles north-east of El Arish; but Dobell had to wait for supplies before he could strike a fresh blow. The new position was a formidable one, made up of a central keep surrounded by three strong series of works connected by trenches, with an open glacis in front of them. The Desert Column,

under Sir Philip Chetwode, consisting of Australian and New Zealand Mounted Troops, British Yeomanry, and the Imperial Camel Corps, left El Arish on the evening of January 8, 1917, and at dawn on the 9th had surrounded the enemy. As at Magdhaba, the Australians and New Zealanders attacked on the right from the east, while the Camel Corps moved against the front. By 11 a.m. Rafa was taken, and by 4.45 p.m. the New Zealanders had captured the main redoubt. By 5.30 p.m. the action, which had lasted ten hours, was over, and a relieving enemy column, coming from Shellal, had been driven back. Our casualties were only 487 in all, and from the enemy we took 1,600 unwounded prisoners, six machine guns, four mountain guns, and a quantity of transport.

The actions of Magdhaba and Rafa were models of desert campaigning, and showed the perfect co-operation of all arms. They were battles of the old type, where mobility and tactical boldness carried the day, and where from a neighbouring height every incident of the fight could be followed. The result was the clearing of the Sinai desert of all formed bodies of Turkish troops. Operations in the interior and the south, conducted by small flying columns of cavalry and camelry, had kept pace with the greater movement in the north. The British troops were now beyond the desert, on the edge of habitable country. The next objective was the Gaza–Beersheba line—the gateway to Syria.

During the last month of 1916 the western borders of Egypt were comparatively peaceful. The last flickering of rebellion was stamped out in Darfur in November, when the ex-sultan, Ali Dinar, was killed. The Baharia and Dakhla oases had been occupied without trouble, and our chief business on that frontier was that of police patrols and an occasional reconnaissance. But during January news came that Sidi Ahmed, the Grand Senussi, with his commander-in-chief, Mahommed Saleh, and a force of 1,200, was preparing to leave the Siwa oasis and return to Jaghbub. Major-General Watson, commanding the Western Force, was ordered to advance on the Siwa and Girba oases, with the object of capturing the Grand Senussi and scattering his following. But to conduct any considerable force over the 200 waterless miles between Mersa Matruh and Siwa would have taken at least a month's preparation, so the task was entrusted to a column of armoured motor cars. The plan was for the main body to attack the enemy camp at Girba, while a detachment should hold the Munasib Pass—the only pass between Siwa and Jaghbub practicable for camels—and so deflect Sidi Ahmed's flight into the waterless desert.

On 3rd February the main enemy camp at Girba was attacked. Saleh resisted strongly all day, while Sidi Ahmed made off westward. At dawn on the 4th, Saleh too was in flight, and on the 5th, Siwa was entered without opposition. Meantime the Munasib detachment had occupied the pass and ambushed a party of the enemy. Sidi Ahmed was therefore forced to abandon his natural route of retreat, and with his commander-in-chief make the best of a bad road to his distant sanctuary. The expedition, in the words of Sir Archibald Murray's dispatch, "dealt a rude blow to the *moral* of the Senussi, left the Grand Senussi himself painfully making his way to Jaghbub through the rugged and waterless dunes, and freed my western front from the menace of his forces."

In August Lieutenant-General Sir Stanley Maude, who had commanded the 13th Division, had succeeded Sir Percy Lake in command of the Mesopotamian Expeditionary Force. The worst troubles of that army were now over. Hospital arrangements had been perfected, river transport had been reorganized, railway communications had been completed, and all the work behind the front, without which an advance of troops cannot be made, had reached a state of efficiency very different from the confusion of the early days. General Maude had before him an intricate strategical problem. His area of command stretched from the banks of the Euphrates to the walls of Ispahan, and it seemed as if the enemy aimed at containing the British on the Tigris, while attacking towards Nasiriyeh on the Euphrates in the west, and in the east waging a campaign through Persia against the safety of India. In these circumstances, the British Commander-in-Chief decided rightly that "to disseminate our troops in order to safeguard the various conflicting interests involved would have relegated us to a passive defensive everywhere." The true policy was to strike at the enemy's main centre, Bagdad, for a successful advance up the Tigris would relieve the pressure in Persia and on the Euphrates. Movement was, of course, impossible during the summer. The intense heat had tried the health of men who had already behind them an incredible record of desert warfare. The cooler days of the early autumn were employed in improving the training of all arms, accumulating supplies at the front, and bringing forward drafts for the different units. By the end of November the time was ripe for an advance. The battalions were up to strength and in good health and spirits, and the concentration on the river upstream from Sheikh Saad was completed.

We have seen in an earlier chapter that after the fall of Kut we had considerably advanced our lines before the advent of the Mesopotamian summer put an end to campaigning. In the beginning of December the Turkish front before Kut lay as follows :— On the left bank of the Tigris, fifteen miles from the town, they still held the Sanna-i-yat position—now much elaborated and strengthened—between the Suwaicha marsh and the river, and all the hinterland as far as Kut was covered with a series of reserve lines. On the right bank their front ran from a point on the Tigris three miles north-east of Kut, across the big loop which is called the Khadairi Bend, to the Shatt-el-Hai two miles below where it leaves the main river. There it crossed the Hai and ran north-west to the Shumran Bend of the Tigris. There was a pontoon bridge across the Hai close to its point of exit from the main river, and another across the Tigris at Shumran. Further, the enemy held the Hai itself for several miles below the bridgehead. Everywhere he had strong trench systems and wire entanglements. On the left bank we were within 120 yards of him at Sanna-i-yat ; on the right bank our contact was less close, our advanced posts being about two miles from the Khadairi Bend and five miles from the Hai position.

The strategical situation was, on the whole, favourable for Maude. The enemy's lines on the right bank of the Tigris were a dozen miles upstream from those on the left bank. His communications were therefore, in the technical phrase, in prolongation of his battle front. If we carried the line of the Hai, we should be in a position to threaten seriously the communications of the Sanna-i-yat lines. On the other hand, our own situation was reasonably safe. The waterless desert made any flanking movement against us from the Hai precarious, and the Suwaicha marsh, if it protected the Turkish left flank, also secured our right. Again, the long front gave us many opportunities for feints to cover our real purpose. Maude's plan was simple and sound. His first object was to carry the Hai line, and then gradually to drive the enemy from the right bank of the river. If he succeeded in this, he would be able by constant attacks to make him nervous about his communications. Then a great effort could be made to force the Sanna-i-yat position, which would mean the fall of Kut. But even if this operation proved too difficult, it might be possible, when the enemy was sufficiently weakened and distracted, to cross the Tigris west of Kut and cut his communications. As we shall see, Maude succeeded in each item of his plan.

By 12th December our concentration was complete, and our troops in a position for attack. The British striking force was divided into two parts. That on the right, under Lieutenant-General A. S. Cobbe, V.C., was devoted to holding the enemy on the left bank of the river to the Sanna-i-yat position, and watching the right bank up to the Khadairi Bend; while that on the left, under Lieutenant-General W. R. Marshall (which included the cavalry), was by a surprise march to win a position on the Hai. All through the 13th Cobbe bombarded Sanna-i-yat as if about to attack there, and that night Marshall moved westward against the Hai. The enemy was taken by surprise, and without much difficulty we crossed at Atab and Basrugiyeh, about eight miles from Kut, clearing the ground on the western bank to the depth of over a mile. We then swung northward along both banks to a point some two and a half miles from Kut. Two pontoon bridges were constructed at Atab. During the next two days we pressed steadily forward, while our aircraft bombed the Turkish bridge of boats at Shumran, and compelled the enemy to remove it to the west side of the bend. The Turkish bridgehead at the exit of the Hai was now under a continuous bombardment. On the 18th we succeeded in reaching the river between the Khadairi Bend and Kut, thereby severing the Turkish lateral communications on the right bank. This left the Turkish force in the Bend cut off on left and right, and sustained only by their connection with the enemy left flank across the river.

On 26th December the weather broke, and the rains fell steadily for a fortnight. The stream rose and spread over the countryside, so that our single-line railway, now extended to Atab, was worked with difficulty, and cavalry reconnaissances were hampered by the lagoons and sodden ground. Nevertheless, during the first weeks of 1917, we kept up a steady bombardment, and especially made the Turkish bridgehead at Shumran a precarious lodgment. An attempt by us on 20th January to bridge the Tigris four miles west of Shumran was anticipated by the enemy, and had to be abandoned. But the chief work of these days was the clearing of the Khadairi Bend. Our hold on the Hai had given us real advantages, the chief of which were that we were in a position to threaten constantly the Turkish communications west of Shumran; that we had removed the danger of any attack on Nasiriyeh, on the Euphrates; and that we had cut off the enemy's supplies from the rich country of the middle Hai. We had reached the banks of the Tigris south-east of Kut, but between that point and Magasis

the Turks still held the right bank, and could in flood-time open the "bunds" and swamp part of our front. Obviously, before we could advance we must clear this Khadairi Bend, which would give us the mastery of the whole right bank from Kut downwards. The task was entrusted to Cobbe, who, beginning operations on 5th January, succeeded by the 19th in effecting his purpose. The ground was flat and bare, and exposed on both flanks to fire at close range from across the river. Hence many thousand yards of new trenches and covered approaches had to be dug in drenching rain and under continuous fire. The successive Turkish lines were carried by severe hand-to-hand fighting, which did much to weaken the enemy *moral*.

Meantime Marshall was busy winning the last fragment of the Hai line, that corner close to the Tigris where the Turks held a strongly entrenched salient astride the lesser stream. It took him thirteen days to get into position for the attack; but on 24th January his trenches were within 400 yards of the enemy front. Next day he carried the Turkish first line on a breadth of more than a mile, and his right wing also broke through the second line, thanks to the clearing of the Khadairi Bend. His left wing, on the western bank of the Hai, had a more difficult task; for it was exposed to heavy enfilading fire, and had the enemy in strength against it. At first it, too, won the Turkish second line, but after four attacks it was compelled to retire. Next morning two Punjabi battalions finally carried the ground, and by the 28th we held two miles of the position to a depth of from 300 to 700 yards. On 1st February our right won the enemy third line; but a similar gain on our left could not be held against the Turkish counter-attack, supported by enfilading fire. Next day Marshall extended his left towards the Tigris, with a view to operating presently against the Dahra Bend—the loop of the river between Kut and the Shumran peninsula. On the 4th the whole of the left bank of the Hai was ours, and the Turks fell back to the Liquorice Factory, in the western angle between the Hai and the Tigris, and a line across the Dahra Bend.

The enemy's hold on the right bank of the Tigris was now rapidly weakening, and the next step was to clear the Dahra Bend. The Liquorice Factory was kept under constant bombardment, for it was a nest of machine guns, and on the 9th ground was won in the enemy's centre, while on the left we pushed our front to within 2,500 yards of the south end of the Shumran Bend. On the 10th there was a general forward movement, in spite of a high wind

and a dust storm, and the Turks were compelled to evacuate the Liquorice Factory, and withdraw to a new line two and a half miles long well inside the Dahra Bend. Next day we reached the Tigris, south-east of the Shumran Bend, and so enclosed the enemy. Marshall resolved to attack the Turkish right centre, and several days were occupied with driving the enemy from advanced posts and constructing trenches and approaches for the coming assault. On the 15th we feinted hard against the Turkish left, and this enabled us to carry the enemy's right centre on a broad front, since our barrage prevented him from transferring thither the men he had used to strengthen his left. Presently his left centre was carried by Scottish and Indian troops, who pushed north-eastward towards the Tigris, isolated the Turkish left, and took 1,000 prisoners. The enemy fell back across the river, leaving some 2,000 prisoners behind him, and by the morning of the 16th the Dahra Bend was wholly in our hands. "Thus terminated," wrote Maude, "a phase of severe fighting, brilliantly carried out. To eject the enemy from that horseshoe bend, bristling with trenches and commanded from across the river on three sides by hostile batteries and machine guns, called for offensive qualities of a high standard on the part of the troops."

Maude had carried out the main preliminaries of his plan. He had won all the right bank of the Tigris in the vicinity of Kut. Khalil's line now ran east and west from Sanna-i-yat to Shumran, with his left wing bent at right angles between the Suwaicha marsh and the river. It was geographically a strong defensive position, for it was protected throughout almost its whole length by the Tigris. But it had one weak point—at Shumran, where the enemy's battle front and his line of communications met—and his fears for this point had compelled him to weaken other parts of his front. The moment had come for the British to cross the river, and the proper crossing place must be as far as possible to the west. If the crossing was to succeed, the forces at Sanna-i-yat must be kept closely engaged, and activities maintained along the whole river line. We hoped to enter by the back door, but if that was to be forced open it was necessary to knock violently at the front door to distract the occupants.

On 17th February Cobbe attacked at Sanna-i-yat over sodden ground, for during the last few days the rain had fallen heavily. His attack was a surprise, and with little loss he carried the first and second lines on a frontage of 400 yards. Enemy counter-attacks, however, drove him back to his own lines before the even-

ing. Then came a pause, while preparations were being made for the Shumran crossing, approaches being constructed and guns moved under cover of night, and the crews of the pontoons trained for their duties. On the 22nd, part of Cobbe's forces again attacked at Sanna-i-yat, and after a day's hard fighting secured the first two enemy trench lines. That night we made a feint as if to cross at Kut and Magasis, and during the daylight we had allowed our preparations to be furtively observed, so that the enemy moved troops and guns to the Kut peninsula. On the 23rd came the real attempt. The place selected for the purpose was the south end of the Shumran Bend, and three ferries were provided immediately downstream. Just before dawn the work of the ferries began. The lower ferries came immediately under such a furious machine-gun fire that they had to be closed, though not until a gallant company of Gurkhas had reached the farther bank. But the troops using the uppermost ferry crossed with ease and took five machine guns and 300 prisoners. By 7.30 a.m. three companies of Norfolks and 150 Gurkhas were across, and the work of building the bridge began. The Turkish guns were engaged by ours, and the Norfolks and Gurkhas, pressing inland and along the bank, were soon a mile north of the bridgehead. At 4.30 p.m. the bridge was open for traffic. "By nightfall, as a result of the day's operations, our troops had, by their unconquerable valour and determination, forced a passage across a river in flood, 340 yards wide, in face of strong opposition, and had secured a position 2,000 yards in depth, covering the bridgehead; while ahead of this line our patrols were acting vigorously against the enemy's advanced detachments, who had suffered heavy losses, including about 700 prisoners taken in all. The infantry of one division was across, and another division was ready to follow." It was a crossing worthy to rank with the passage of the Aisne in September 1914; for if the Turkish strength was less formidable than the German, the swollen Tigris was a far greater barrier than the sluggish French stream.

That same day Cobbe, at Sanna-i-yat, had won the third, fourth, and fifth lines, and was busy making roads for his guns and transport across the tangle of ruined trenches. On the 24th Marshall advanced in the Shumran Bend, fighting hard in the north-east corner, where a series of nullahs were honeycombed with machine-gun emplacements. That night the enemy, stoutly resisting, had been forced back 1,000 yards. Another division had crossed the bridge, and the cavalry, too, were over, and striving to break out from the peninsula to cut off Khalil's retreat

towards Bagdad. Our airplanes reported that every road was thronged with retiring troops, but the Turkish rearguards made a good defence, and our horsemen did not emerge from the peninsula till too late for a grand *coup*. That day Cobbe carried the enemy's sixth line at Sanna-i-yat, and marched on the Nakhailat and Suwada positions, only to find them empty. The iron fortress, which had defied all our efforts in the early months of 1916, had yielded to the resolute assault of our infantry, supported by the distraction at Shumran. Cobbe entered Kut unopposed, and the gunboats came upstream from Falahiyeh, and anchored off the town where exactly ten months before the *Julnar* had failed to run the blockade and bring food to Townshend's famished remnant.

Meantime Marshall's forces and the cavalry were hot upon Khalil's track. Eight miles from Shumran the Turks attempted a stand, but were driven in with a loss of 400 prisoners. The cavalry on our right endeavoured to get round the Turkish flank, but were held up by entrenched infantry and the frequent marshes. The pursuit was in two columns—one following the river, and the other striking across country in the hope of intercepting the enemy rearguards. But the Turkish retreat was well handled, and the bulk of their forces were too quick for us. Our gunboat flotilla had better luck, for it sunk or took most of the enemy's craft. Among its captures were the *Firefly*, the *Sumana*, and the *Pioneer*, vessels which we had lost in the preceding campaign. By 28th February Marshall had arrived at Aziziyeh, halfway to Bagdad, where he halted to reorganize his communications, while Cobbe's forces closed to the front. Since the crossing of the Tigris we had taken 4,000 prisoners, of whom 188 were officers, 39 guns, 22 trench mortars, 11 machine guns, besides vast quantities of other material.

On 5th March the advance was renewed. Marshall marched eighteen miles to Zeur, while the cavalry pushed on seven miles further to Laj, and had a successful brush in a dust storm with a Turkish rearguard, during which a Hussar regiment galloped straight through the enemy trenches. Next day the Ctesiphon position was passed; it was found to be strongly entrenched but empty, and the cavalry got within three miles of the river Diala, which enters the Tigris from the east eight miles below Bagdad. Next day, 7th March, our advanced front was in contact with the enemy along that river line.

Here it was clear the Turks proposed to attempt a stand. After sunset on the night of the 7th, when we launched our first

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THE FALL OF BAGDAD.

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pontoon, it was greeted by heavy rifle and machine-gun fire, and four later pontoons met the same fate. A small column from Marshall's force was ferried across the Tigris in order to enfilade the Diala position, and during the night of the 8th four attempts were made to cross the Diala. One partially succeeded, and seventy men of the North Lancashires established a post in a loop of the river, and held it gallantly for twenty-four hours. At 4 a.m. on the morning of the 10th Marshall attacked again at two points a mile apart, and by 7 a.m. the East Lancashires and the Wiltshires had crossed and joined the North Lancashires. A bridge was constructed by noon, the riverside villages were cleared, and some hundreds of prisoners were taken. That night we were in touch with the enemy's last position covering Bagdad from the south-east along the ridge called Tel Muhammad.

Meantime, on the 8th, a bridge had been thrown across the Tigris below the Diala mouth, and the cavalry and part of Cobbe's forces had crossed, and advanced against the Turkish position at Shawa Khan, which covered Bagdad from the direction of the Euphrates valley. Shawa Khan was easily taken on the morning of the 9th, but we were kept busy for the rest of the day with the Turkish rearguard a mile and a half to the northward. During the night this rearguard fell back, and on the 10th we engaged it within three miles of Bagdad, while our cavalry from the west came within two miles of the railway station, which lay on the right bank of the Tigris. A furious dust storm checked our advance that day, and at midnight the enemy retired. Next morning, 11th March, at 5.30 a.m., our troops groped their way through the dust into the railway station, and learned that the enemy force on the right bank had retired upstream beyond the city. Our advanced guards entered the suburbs on that bank, and the cavalry pressed the enemy to the north-west. Early that same morning Marshall had discovered that the Turks were retreating from the Tel Muhammad ridge. He lost no time in pursuing them, but he found that the dust storm prevented him from keeping contact with the enemy. An hour or two later he had entered Bagdad, and was warmly welcomed by the inhabitants, who were threatened with looting and burning by a riff-raff of Kurds and Arabs. Order was presently restored, and the British flag hoisted over the city. The fleeing Turks had attempted to destroy the stores they could not remove, but a vast amount of military material was left behind. From the Arsenal we recovered the guns which Townshend had rendered useless before Kut was surrendered.

The capture of Bagdad was an event of the first magnitude in the history of the war. It restored British prestige in the East, which Kut and Gallipoli had shaken. It deprived the Teutonic League of a territory which had always played a vital part in its policy. It hit Turkey hard in her pride, and not less in her military strength. It cheered and enheartened our Allies, for Bagdad was so far the only famous city won from the enemy. But the chief importance of the success was its proof to the world of the *moral* of the British army and the British nation. They had been beaten, but they had not accepted defeat. They had fallen back, after their fashion, only to come again. The gallant dash had failed, so they had set themselves resolutely to win by slow and sure stages. The Tigris Expedition was in many respects a parallel to the old Sudan campaigns. In the one as in the other Britain had begun with improvisations and failed; in the one as in the other she had ended with methodical organization, and had succeeded. Victory following on failure is doubly creditable, and after the confusion and tragedy of her first venture it was proof of a stout national fibre that she could so nobly retrieve her mistakes.

The performance of Sir Stanley Maude would be hard to overpraise. On a broad basis of careful preparation he had constructed a strategical scheme as brilliant as it was simple. The tactical work had been marked by great resourcefulness and ingenuity, and by the most meticulous care. Here there was none of that lack of generalship which at other times had made fruitless the gallantry of our fighting men. But if the leadership was excellent, the stamina and courage of the troops were super-excellent. These were men who had for the most part been engaged for a year and a half in the same terrain, who had endured every extreme of heat and cold, who had suffered from the countless local diseases and the earlier disorder of the hospital and transport service, and who had in their memory more than one galling disaster. Of their achievement let their leader speak:—

"Each difficulty encountered seemed but to steel the determination to overcome it. It may be truly said that not only have the traditions of these ancient British and Indian regiments been in safe keeping in the hands of their present representatives, but that these have even added fresh lustre to the records on their time-honoured scrolls. Where fighting was almost daily in progress it is difficult to particularize, but the fierce encounters west of the Hai, the passages of the Tigris and Diala, and the final storming of the Sanna-i-yat position, may perhaps be mentioned as typical of all that is best in the British and Indian soldier."

BOOK III.

THE GREAT SALLIES.

CHAPTER LXXII.

THE RUSSIAN *COUP D'ÉTAT.*

December 29, 1916–*March* 16, 1917.

Rasputin: his Career and Death—Protopopov—The Quiet before the Storm—Revolt of Petrograd Garrison—Formation of Provisional Government—The Petrograd Soviet—Abdication of the Emperor—The House of Romanov—The Gap to be filled—The Failure of the Moderates.

THE opening of 1917 found Russia in a state of artificial calm. The stormy November session of the Duma and the unanswered and unanswerable attacks upon the administration had, it appeared, produced no lasting result. The autocracy had won, as was shown by the appointment of Prince N. Golitzin as Premier, the rehabilitation of men whose career had been a public scandal, and above all by the increased activities of M. Protopopov, the principal agent of reaction. Yet behind the calm there was movement, the more significant because it was so quiet. The reasonable and patriotic elements in Russia's life, the Duma, the Union of the Towns and Zemstvos, the Council of the Empire, the United Nobility—men of every shade of political opinion—were gradually drawing together. The communists in the industrial areas were grouped, though with a different purpose, on the same side. The Army and the Army chiefs were in full sympathy. Opposed to this great mass of opinion stood the Court circle and the "dark forces"—small in numbers but all-powerful, for they controlled the administrative machine, and the secret police were their docile servants. That back-world of illiberalism, corruption, and neurotic mysticism was well aware that it was fighting for its life. It had forgotten the struggle with Germany and the interests of the nation. Its aim was to force on a futile revolution, to quench it in blood, to quell by terrorism any agitation for reform, and to entrench itself anew in power for

another century. It had become wholly unnational, and it had also become desperate, for an event had happened at the close of the year 1916 which had been a challenge to an implacable vendetta.

Forty-four years before there had been born in the Siberian district of Tobolsk a certain Gregory Novikh, who, as he grew up, was given by his neighbours the name of Rasputin, which signifies "dirty dog." He came of a peasant family, which, like many Siberian stocks, had a hereditary gift of mesmeric power. His youth was largely devoted to horse-stealing and perjury, and his prowess as a drunkard and a rural Don Juan was famed throughout the countryside. In early manhood he added another part to his repertoire. He became religious, let his hair grow long, and tramped about the world barefoot, while his long ostentatious fasts proclaimed his holiness. He was never in religious orders; but his fame as an ascetic grew, and the dignitaries of the Church turned a favourable eye on one who might prove a popular miracle-worker. He did not change his habits, for on occasion he was as drunken as ever, and his immorality was flagrant; but it was not the first time that a Casanova had masqueraded in a hair shirt. Devout ladies of high rank heard of him and admitted him to their circles, and he played havoc among the devout ladies. His personal magnetism and his erotic mania gave him an uncanny power over hysterical women on the outlook for the miraculous.

Moscow was at first his sphere of influence; but his reputation spread far and wide, and no scandals could check it. He started a new cult, where dancing and debauchery were interspersed with mystical *séances;* and presently, through the medium of one of the ladies-in-waiting, he had the Imperial family among his devotees. The man was a scoundrel and a charlatan, but he must have had some strange quality of his own to attract and hold so great a following. He was given the office of Lighter of the Sacred Lamps in the Palace, but his real function was that of chief medicine-man to a superstitious Court. His filthy peasant's shirt was used as a charm to cure the little Tsarevitch of a fever. His lightest word became law, and he was consulted on matters of which he did not understand the names. Fashionable ladies fought for his favours; great ecclesiastics and ministers waited patiently in his anteroom. He was a man of middle height, with curious, deep-set eyes, long thick hair, and a tangled beard, dressing always in peasant's clothes, and rarely washing. Few

more squalid figures have ever reached supreme power in a great nation.*

After drink and women his chief passion was gold, and he found in politics full gratification for his avarice. To bribe Rasputin became the easiest, and often the only, way to high office. Those who opposed him or failed to cultivate him were dismissed. An unfriendly journalistic reference led to the suppression of the paper that printed it. He held the clergy for the most part in the hollow of his hand. He was a friend of Count Witte in his day, of Maklakov and Sukhomlinov, of Goremykin and Stürmer. He had much to do with the retirement of the Grand Duke Nicholas, who never concealed his contempt for him. At the end of 1916 he had four principal creatures through whom he conducted his business—Protopopov, the Minister of the Interior; Rajev, the Procurator of the Holy Synod; Manasevitch-Manuilov, a jackal of Stürmer's; and Pitirim, the Metropolitan of Petrograd. Grand dukes and princes of the royal blood appealed to the Emperor and Empress to shake themselves loose from his shackles, but the only result was the exile of the appellants. It is not probable that he had any serious pro-German proclivities, though he received German gold. He had no considered views on high politics, and played for his low personal ends. But he was anti-national, inasmuch as he stood for the dark back-world of Russia, which must cease to exist if the Russian people were to emerge victorious from the war.†

Such a man must live in perpetual danger, and it was noticed by those who interviewed him that during the winter he had begun to wear a hunted look, as if he heard the hounds on his trail. He had betrayed so many women that there was scarcely a noble family in Russia but had some wrong to avenge. He had been assaulted several times, and once he had been soundly beaten; but to the amazement of Europe he went on living. The events of November, however, in the Duma and the Council of the Empire

* He was thus described by an observer:—"The fascination of the man lay altogether in his eyes. Otherwise he looked only a common moujik, with no beauty to distinguish him; a sturdy rogue, overgrown with a forest of dirty, unkempt hair, dirty in person, and disgusting in habits. His language oscillated between the stock-in-trade odds and ends of Scripture and mystic writ and the foulest vocabulary of Russian, which of all white men's tongues is the most powerful in the expression of love and affection and of abominable abuse. But the eyes of this satyr were remarkable—cold, steely grey, with that very rare power of contracting and expanding the pupils at will regardless of the amount of light present."

† Guchkov had denounced him in the Duma in 1912 as "a mysterious tragi-comic figure, an apparition of the Dark Ages."

showed him that his enemies were getting bolder. It was not the people at large whom he had to fear, for they scarcely knew of his existence. It was the nobility and the upper classes who wished to remove a plague spot from the national life. He grew frightened, shut himself up in his house, and only saw those who were first examined by his private bodyguard of secret police. Presently his alarm increased, and he tried to conceal his whereabouts; but by this time the ring was drawn close around him, and it was very certain that he would die.

On the night of 29th December 1916, Prince Yusupov, a young man of rank and wealth, who had been educated at Oxford, and had married a connection of the Imperial family, rang up Rasputin on the telephone, and asked him to supper at his house. Such supper-parties were no unusual things in the man's experience, for he could drink any guardsman under the table, and was famous as a ribald jester. Rather unwillingly he accepted the invitation, and was fetched by his host in his own car. The chauffeur, who was a member of the Duma, followed them inside the house, where they found the Grand Duke Dimitri Paulovitch. His executioners locked the door, and after a struggle shot him dead. The noise attracted the attention of the police, who came to inquire as to its meaning. "We were getting rid of a troublesome dog," they were told. The corpse was placed in the car, and taken to a lonely island in the Neva, where it was weighted with stones, and dropped through a hole in the ice. Blood-marks on the snow and one of his goloshes were the only marks of the deed; but three days later the body was found. After mass said by the Metropolitan, it was taken to Tsarskoe Selo, and buried in a silver coffin, the Emperor and Protopopov being among the pall-bearers, and the Empress among the chief mourners. The executioners went home, and telephoned to the police to proclaim what they had done. Next evening the *Bourse Gazette* announced Rasputin's death, and that night at the Imperial Theatre the audience celebrated the event with enthusiasm, and sang the National Anthem. The whole country applauded the equity of the deed, and regarded it less as a murder than as a judicial execution. The man had put himself where the law could not touch him, and representatives of the people and of the nobility ceremoniously and deliberately brought him within the pale of a rough justice.

The death of Gregory Rasputin was the first act in the Russian Revolution. It is the way of revolutions to have among their preliminaries some strange drama, apparently outside the main

march of events, which yet in the retrospect is seen to be organically linked with it. In slaying him the Russian nobility made their reckoning with one who had smirched the honour of their class, and the next step was for the Russian people to take order with what was smirching the honour of the nation. But for the moment the autocracy drew the strings tighter. Rasputin was dead, but Protopopov remained. The Duma, which should have met on January 25, 1917, was postponed for a month, in order, it was stated, to give the new Premier time to revise the policy of his predecessors. The general congress of the Union of the Towns and Zemstvos had already been forbidden, and the police were given the right of being present at all private meetings of any organization.* The censorship was drawn tight, and the Minister of the Interior turned the ordinary work of his department over to his assistants, devoting all his energies to the press and the secret police. The numbers of the latter were greatly increased, and Petrograd was filled with them; while machine guns, sent from England for the Army and sorely needed at the front, were concealed on the roofs at commanding points throughout the city. All things were ripe for the forcing on of that abortive revolution which the reactionaries desired for their complete establishment in power.

The protagonist in this sinister business, Alexander Protopopov, will remain one of the enigmas of history. Originally a Liberal, he came to Western Europe in the summer of 1916 with a deputation of members of the Duma and the Council of the Empire, and delighted audiences in England and France with his perfervid oratory. He had great charm of manner, and an air of earnest simplicity which deeply impressed those who met him. He talked the commonplaces of the Allied cause, but with a conviction and a warmth of imagination which made his speeches by far the best made by any foreign visitor to our shores since the outbreak of war. But those who were often in his company observed that he seemed to be living always at fever point. He suffered much from insomnia, and his talk was often wild and strained. On his return to Russia he fell completely into the hands of the Court party, and more especially of those elements which were represented by Rasputin. His neurotic temperament and his restless romantic imagination predisposed him to be influenced by the glamour of the Court and the necromancy of charlatans. He took to spending

* This measure was passed under Article 87 of the Constitution, which permitted exceptional legislation when the Duma was not in session.

as much time at *séances* as in the Council Chamber. Towards the end he became known as the "Mad Minister," and it is likely that his wits were seriously unhinged. That, at any rate, is the most charitable hypothesis on which to explain the aberrations of a man who had in his time done honest public service, and who was certainly no common traitor.

During January and February the people seemed apathetic under the new tyranny. No one desired revolution except the agitators who had made it their business, for the thinking man realized that it would cripple the conduct of the war and play the game of the enemy. The reactionaries grew bolder, and on 9th February the Labour group of M. Guchkov's War Industry Committee—the equivalent to the British Ministry of Munitions—were arrested on a charge of conspiracy, and imprisoned without trial. The outrage was received with calm, for its intention was seen to be provocative. M. Miliukov and some of the Labour leaders wrote appeals to the people to remain quiet, and their appeals were suppressed by the authorities. Petrograd was made a military district by itself, but even this menace failed to create disturbances. An Allied commission, including Lord Milner and General de Castelnau, was in Russia at the time, and its members, though they believed revolution to be inevitable some time or other, misjudged the popular temper, and thought that nothing would happen till after the war. On 27th February the Duma met amid bodyguards of police. In the Council of the Empire Scheglovitov, who had originally been dismissed from office along with Sukhomlinov, and in the Duma Markov, revealed themselves as the Government's representatives, and it was clear that Protopopov was about to engineer new elections, that he might have a Duma to his liking. Things went so tamely that the reactionaries began to flatter themselves that their enemies were cowed, and that they had already won the game. But Purishkevitch, an extreme Conservative and a sturdy patriot, spoke more truly than he knew when he concluded a fiery attack on Protopopov with the words, "Dawn is not yet, but it is behind the hills."

In the meantime the people were hungry, and hunger is the great dissolvent of patience. It had been a bitter winter with heavy snowfalls, and the supply of food was scanty. The immense demands of the Army had strained the transport machinery to its utmost, and the situation was made worse by the restrictions imposed on the export of grain from one district to another, for in some areas there were large surplus stocks. The Government

had no plan to deal with the shortage, and by February the daily bread ration in Petrograd, small at the best, looked as if it were about to fail. Patiently the people waited for hours in the bread queues, telling each other that their kinsfolk were enduring far worse hardships in the trenches, and that it behoved them to be patient for Russia's sake. But word began to go round that before the spring came real starvation would be upon them, and there were many—Social Democrats in the factories, mysterious figures at the street corners—to point the moral and ask what was the use of a Government which could not give them bread. Long, straggling, innocent processions began to wander about Petrograd, helpless people asking only food for their children. They seemed to beg and expostulate rather than demand.

Thursday, 8th March, was a day of clear, fine weather. In the afternoon there was a gala performance of Lermontov's *Masquerade* at the Alexander Theatre, on which ten years' preparation and vast sums of money had been lavished. All day long women waited in the streets outside the bakers' shops for a chance to get their dwindling bread ration. *Panis et circenses*—the old antidotes to revolution! In the Duma a debate on the question of food supplies was winding out its slow length. Everywhere there seemed a profound peace—the peace of apathy and disheartenment. But in the afternoon a small party of Cossacks galloped down the Nevski Prospect, causing the promenaders to ask whether there was trouble somewhere across the river. A little later a few bakers' shops were looted in the poorer quarters, and a forlorn and orderly procession of students and workmen's wives appeared on the Nevski. Protopopov's spies reported that all was quiet; but they were wrong, for the revolution had begun. The breaking-point had been reached in the people's temper, and the city was on the tiptoe of expectation, seeking for a sign.

Next day, Friday, the 9th, in the same bright, cold weather, it became apparent that some change had taken place. The people by a common impulse flowed out into the streets. Some of the chief newspapers did not appear, and those that did contained solemn warnings about the crisis. The food debate in the Duma took a new turn, and the Government was appealed to to grapple with the provisioning of the capital. Crowds were everywhere, laughing, talking, and always expectant. The Cossack patrols stopped to fraternize with these groups, and seemed to be on the best of terms with them. Workmen chaffed and cheered the soldiers, and the soldiers could be heard assuring the people that

they would not shoot at them, whatever their orders. "You are not going to fire on us, brothers," cried the crowd to the troops; "we only want bread." "No," was the reply; "we are hungry, like yourselves." Towards the police, on the other hand, there was no friendliness. Stones and bottles were thrown at them, and there was some shooting. Two workmen were arrested and taken into a courtyard, which was defended by a company of soldiers. The crowd tried to rush the courtyard to effect a rescue, and the soldiers seemed about to fire, when a band of Cossacks rode up, secured the arrested men, and delivered them to their friends. There was very little political speech-making. Late in the afternoon a workman, standing on a tub in the middle of the Nevski, announced that they must get rid of the Government. One of his hearers shouted, "Down with the war!" and was at once sternly rebuked. "Remember the blood of our brothers and sons must not be spilt for nothing. The thing to do is to get rid of the Government. Peace when it comes must be an honourable peace."

To the casual observer it seemed as if there was no purpose except idle curiosity in the great throngs. They seemed too tolerant and good-humoured to mean serious business. But to one who watched more closely it was clear that there was some kind of organization behind it all. Otherwise why the constant appeals for moderation made wherever there was a chance of the peace being broken? "The Government wants an excuse to crush the people. Do not play into their hands by rioting, but keep cool. The one great thing is to force the Government to go." Something already had been achieved. There had been meetings and processions, and the soldiers had encouraged them. But it was hard to believe that these leaderless crowds could achieve anything great. They were unarmed and undisciplined, and in Petrograd there were at least 28,000 police, with many machine guns.

Next day, Saturday, the trams stopped running, though the shops were still open, and the cinematograph shows crowded. The expectation had grown tenser, and the streets were more densely packed than ever. The workmen, having received their week's pay, struck work and joined the throngs, and serious political talk took the place of the gossip and banter of the preceding day. The next move lay with the Government. Either it must satisfy the people, or it must coerce them.

The following morning, Sunday, the 11th, the Government acted. General Khabalov, the new military governor of Petro-

grad, plastered the city with proclamations, announcing that the police had orders to disperse all crowds, and that any workman who did not return to work on Monday morning would be sent to the trenches. No attention was paid to the first part, and the crowds in the streets were enormous, including women and children who had turned out from pure curiosity. It was noticed that the police patrols had been much strengthened, and that detachments of regulars had been brought in to assist. The Nevski Prospect was cleared from end to end and put under military guard, but the people took it calmly. There was a certain amount of firing on the crowds, with the result that some two hundred were killed. Observers, friendly to the revolution, saw in the day another complete fiasco after the fashion of Russian revolts. But three significant incidents had occurred. A company of the Pavlovski regiment had mutinied when told to fire on the people. The President of the Duma, M. Rodzianko, had telegraphed to the Emperor :—

" Situation serious. Anarchy reigns in the capital. Government is paralyzed. Transport, food, and fuel supplies are utterly disorganized. General discontent is growing. Disorderly firing is going on in the streets. Various companies of soldiers are shooting at each other. It is absolutely necessary to invest some one who enjoys the confidence of the people with powers to form a new Government. No time must be lost. And delay may be fatal. I pray God that at this hour responsibility may not fall on the wearer of the Crown."

He sent copies of his telegram to the different commanders-in-chief at the front, and asked for their support. The Government, after much hesitation, also acted, and Prince Golitzin prorogued the Duma, under discretionary powers which he had received from the Emperor. But the Duma refused to be prorogued, and elected a Provisional Committee which continued to sit. Rodzianko's huge figure rose in the winter twilight, and, waving in his hand the order for dissolution, he announced that the Duma was now the sole constitutional authority of Russia.

Next day the soldiers followed suit.* Monday, 12th March, was to prove the decisive day, and a movement which had begun by slow and halting stages was to become a whirlwind. During the night the two operative forces of the revolution had made their decision. The troops—both the Petrograd garrison and those brought in as reinforcements—were aware what their orders would

* The Petrograd garrison had reached the enormous figure of 160,000. It was not trusted by the Government, who relied mainly upon the police.

be, and were resolved to disobey them. They could not shoot down their own class. The consciously revolutionary elements in the army were small, and this resolve was simply the revolt of human nature against an unnatural task. At the same time the socialist organizations among the workmen were preparing their own scheme. If the old régime were dissolved they would be ready with an alternative.

Before nine o'clock in the morning the streets were black with people, and it was curious to note that on the crust of the volcano much of the normal life of the city continued. Men went about their ordinary avocations till they were pulled up by some lava stream from the eruption. The crisis came early in the day. The Preobrajenski Guards, the flower of the Household troops, were ordered to fire on the mob; instead, they shot their more unpopular officers. The Volynski regiment was sent to coerce them, and joined in the mutiny. The united forces swept down on the Arsenal, and after a short resistance carried the place, and provided the revolution with munitions of war. Then began a day of sheer naked chaos. The soldiers had no plans, and drifted from quarter to quarter, intoxicated with their new freedom, but still maintaining a semblance of discipline. There was no looting, and little drunkenness. No leader appeared, and the force of some 25,000 men—made up of the Preobrajenski, Volynski, Litovski, and Kexholmski regiments *—swung from street to street, as if moved by some elemental law. The headquarters of the autocracy fell one by one. At 11 a.m. the Courts of Law were on fire. Then the various prisons were stormed, and a host of political prisoners, as well as ordinary criminals, released. In the afternoon the great fortress of SS. Peter and Paul surrendered. And all day the nests of the secret police were being smoked out. The chief office was raided, and the papers which it contained were burned in the street. The Bastille of the old régime had fallen.

There was now no semblance of Government in Petrograd except the Duma, still sitting under Rodzianko's presidency. The Emperor had not replied to the first telegram, so a second was dispatched more strongly worded. Then about midday came the news that the Emperor had wired to the Minister of War that he was coming, and that he was bringing troops from the northern front to quell the rising. The Duma continued its session, scarcely

* Many of these troops were not pure Russian. The Volynski regiment was composed of Ruthenes and Ukrainians, the Litovski of Poles, the Kexholmski of Finns.

less at a loss than the crowds now parading the streets. It did not realize as yet the completeness of the *coup d'état*, and so missed the chance of riding the storm. Presently came deputations from the insurgent troops, who were informed of the messages sent to the Emperor. The socialist deputies addressed them, and bade them at all costs maintain order, since order was vital to the cause of freedom. The regular Duma guard was removed, and a new "bodyguard from the pavement" substituted. In the afternoon the Duma conferred in secret, and chose an Executive Committee of twelve men to act as a Provisional Government. Their names were Rodzianko, Nekrasov, Konovalov, Dmitrikov, Lvov, Rjenski, Karaulov, Miliukov, Schledlovski, Shulgin, Tcheidze, and Kerenski. Outside its walls another committee was also being formed, a committee of workmen and social revolutionaries; and since they were in the van of the actual work of the revolution, they speedily obtained a great influence over the troops now pouring into Petrograd. But the centre of gravity was still with the Duma, and all that Monday soldiers, workmen, and students thronged its doors, listening to speeches, and making new constitutions every half-hour. The chief Duma leaders visited the various barracks, and the trend of all appeals was the same—maintain order and discipline, or your new-found liberty is lost. All day prisoners were brought in—officials, and those of the police who had escaped the fury of the mob. One of these was Scheglovitov, the President of the Council of the Empire, and a pillar of the "dark forces." When the night fell the Admiralty searchlights lit the Nevski from end to end, as if to prove that the old secret ways had perished. Close on midnight a shabby man in a dirty fur coat spoke to one of the Duma guards. "Take me," he said, "to the Committee of the Duma. I surrender myself voluntarily, for I seek only the welfare of our country. My name is Protopopov."

The *coup d'état* had been achieved in Petrograd, but not yet in Russia. The Emperor had still to disclose his hand. The views of the great army beyond the walls of the capital were still unknown. But on Tuesday it became plain that no opposition need be feared from that army. Every regiment that reached Petrograd went over whole-heartedly to the revolution. On that day, 13th March, the Duma Committee, now a little clearer in its mind, grappled with the immediate problems of government. It was composed mainly of men who would be called moderates in other countries, men who desired a stable constitutional govern-

ment on the lines of the Western democracies. It had to fear reaction on the one hand, and on the other the extremism of the Council of Labour, which had already organized itself more completely than the Duma, and had a great following both among the Petrograd masses and the incoming troops. Any strife between the two would lead to a bloody commune, and give reaction a chance to re-establish itself; so the Duma Committee, using its two members Tcheidze and Kerenski as its liaison with the extremists, strove to keep in line with the other. All Tuesday the Tauris Palace was one babel of talk. Soldiers, students, Jews, workmen, and socialist agitators held their meetings and camped on its floor, while its courts were a mixture of arsenal and eating-house; and in quieter corners the harassed members of the Executive Committee made plans for getting supplies into the city, argued with Labour delegates, and strove to forecast the future. News had come that Moscow accepted the revolution; but next day the Emperor was expected, and might even then be marching a great army to take order with the new régime.

Meantime, in the streets strange dramas were being enacted. The Admiralty buildings at one end of the Nevski Prospect had been besieged for thirty-six hours. It was the last stronghold of the old Government, and thither General Khabalov had retired on the outbreak of the revolt. On Tuesday morning a letter was sent to the Naval Minister, Grigorovitch, announcing that if the place were not surrendered within half an hour it would be destroyed by the big guns from the fortress of SS. Peter and Paul. Khabalov capitulated, the troops marched out, and on the gates appeared the notice: "Under the protection of the State Duma." The Astoria Hotel, which had been a caravanserai for officers, was attacked, since shots had been fired on the crowd from its roof. The same thing happened elsewhere, for Protopopov's machine guns were still in position on the housetops, and the police did not surrender without a struggle. The taking of those wretched creatures provided the chief instances of barbarities during the first stage of the revolution. When captured they were promptly murdered, often under revolting circumstances, for the people had a long and bitter count against them. During that day, too, the rest of the leaders of the old Government were made prisoners—Stürmer and Pitirim and Kurlov; Dubrovin, a leader of the "Black Hundred"; and Sukhomlinov, who was only saved from being torn in pieces by the interposition of Kerenski.

On Wednesday, the 14th, the *coup d'état* in Petrograd was

virtually over, and the interest centred in the relations between the Executive Committee of the Duma and the Council of Labour, which had now grown into the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates, the *Soviet*, which was to become a familiar name in Europe. Such sovereignty as now existed was divided between them; and, as the revolution spread, and the armies of Brussilov and Russki announced their adherence, there seemed danger of a revolution within the revolution, of civil war between two sides whose feet were alike set on the new path. The Soviet rained proclamations—some of them noble and statesmanlike, some of them visionary and foolish, such as that notorious No. I., framed by the Petrograd Soviet, which abolished saluting for private soldiers off duty, and proclaimed that "the orders of the War Committee must be obeyed, saving only on those occasions when they shall contravene the orders and regulations of the Council of Labour Deputies and Military Delegates." The appeal of the Duma Committee was more wisely inspired:—

"CITIZENS:

"The Provisional Executive Committee of the Duma, with the aid and support of the garrison of the capital and its inhabitants, has now triumphed over the baneful forces of the old régime in such a manner as to enable it to proceed to the more stable organization of the executive power. With this object, the Provisional Committee will name Ministers of the First National Cabinet, men whose past public activity assures them the confidence of the country.

"The new Cabinet will adopt the following principles as the basis of its policy:

"1. An immediate amnesty for all political and religious offences, including military revolts, acts of terrorism, and agrarian crimes.

"2. Freedom of speech, of the press, of associations and labour organizations, and the freedom to strike; with an extension of these liberties to officials and troops, in so far as military and technical conditions permit.

"3. The abolition of social, religious, and racial restrictions and privileges.

"4. Immediate preparation for the summoning of a Constituent Assembly, which, with universal suffrage as a basis, shall establish the Governmental régime and the constitution of the country.

"5. The substitution for the police of a national militia, with elective heads and subject to the self-governing bodies.

"6. Communal elections to be carried out on the basis of universal suffrage.

"7. The troops that have taken part in the revolutionary movement shall not be disarmed, but they are not to leave Petrograd.

"8. While strict military discipline must be maintained on active service, all restrictions upon soldiers in the enjoyment of social rights granted to other citizens are to be abolished."

Meantime there was the Emperor. He had not been deposed, and, to the vast majority of the Russian people, was still sovereign and father. On Wednesday, the 14th, he tried to reach Petrograd; but he got no farther than the little station of Bologoi, where workmen had pulled up the track, and he was compelled to return to Pskov. At 2 a.m. on the morning of the 15th he sent for Russki, and told him: "I have decided to give way, and grant a responsible Ministry. What is your view?" The manifesto, already signed, lay on the table. Russki advised him to get in touch with Rodzianko, and himself telephoned to the Duma in Petrograd and to the other generals. The replies he received made it clear that there was no other course than abdication, and at 10 a.m. he made his report to the Emperor, saying that his view was confirmed not only by Rodzianko, but by Alexeiev, Brussilov, and the Grand Duke Nicholas. Rodzianko could not leave Petrograd; but Guchkov and Shulgin arrived in the evening, and found the Emperor in the royal train, haggard, unwashed, and weary. He had no one in attendance except his veteran aide-de-camp, Count Fredericks. He asked to be told the truth, and he heard that the Army, led by his own Household troops, had joined the revolution. "What do you want me to do?" he asked. "You must abdicate," Guchkov told him, "in favour of your son, with the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch as Regent. Such is the decision of the new Government." The Emperor covered his eyes. "I cannot be separated from my boy," he said. "I will hand the throne to my brother. Give me a sheet of paper."

On that sheet of paper he wrote these words:—

"By the Grace of God, We, Nicholas II., Emperor of all the Russias, to all our faithful subjects:

"In the course of a great struggle against a foreign enemy, who has been endeavouring for three years to enslave our country, it has pleased God to send Russia a further bitter trial. Internal troubles have threatened to compromise the progress of the war. The destinies of Russia, the honour of her heroic Army, the happiness of her people, and the whole future of our beloved country demand that at all costs victory shall be won. The enemy is making his last efforts, and the moment is near when our gallant troops, in concert with their glorious Allies, will finally overthrow him.

"In these days of crisis we have considered that our nation needs

the closest union of all its forces for the attainment of victory. In agreement with the Imperial Duma, we have recognized that for the good of our land we should abdicate the throne of the Russian state and lay down the supreme power.

"Not wishing to separate ourselves from our beloved son, we bequeath our heritage to our brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovitch, with our blessing upon the future of the Russian Throne. We bequeath it to him with the charge to govern in full unison with the national representatives who may sit in the Legislature, and to take his inviolable oath to them in the name of our well-beloved country.

"We call upon all faithful sons of our land to fulfil this sacred and patriotic duty in obeying their Emperor at this painful moment of national trial, and to aid him, together with the representatives of the nation, to lead the Russian people in the way of prosperity and glory.

"May God help Russia!"

But Amurath was not to succeed thus simply to Amurath. When Guchkov brought back his report and the fateful sheet of paper, he found Petrograd seething with constitutional squabbles. The Moderates—the bulk of the Duma Committee—sought a constitutional monarchy; the Council of Workmen's and Soldiers' Delegates desired a republic in so far as they had considered forms of government at all. The abdication of the Emperor was still unknown when, on Thursday afternoon, Miliukov made a speech in the Duma which declared the names of the new Ministers. These were Prince George Lvov, Prime Minister and Minister of the Interior; Miliukov, Foreign Affairs; Guchkov, War and Marine; Kerenski, Justice; Terestchenko, Finance; Shingarev, Agriculture; Konovalov, Commerce and Industries; Nekrasov, Ways and Communications; Manuilov, Public Instruction; Godnev, State Comptroller; Vladimir Lvov, Procurator of the Holy Synod; and Rodichev, Finnish Affairs. It was in the most exact sense a coalition, for it included representatives of every party of the left and centre. The Premier, Manuilov, Miliukov, Rodichev, Shingarev, and Nekrasov, were Constitutional Democrats; V. Lvov was a Liberal Nationalist; Godnev and Guchkov were Octobrists; Konovalov and Terestchenko were Liberals; and Kerenski was a Social Revolutionary. Miliukov explained the credentials of the new Ministry.

"I hear voices ask: 'Who chose you?' No one chose us; for if we had waited for election by the people, we could not have wrenched the power from the hands of the enemy. While we quarrelled about

who should be elected, the foe would have had time to reorganize and reconquer both you and me. We were elected by the Russian Revolution. . . . We shall not retain power for a single moment after we are told by the elected representatives of the people that they wish to see others, more deserving of their confidence, in our place. . . . But we will not relinquish power now, when it is needed to consolidate the people's triumph, and when, should it fall from our hands, it would only be seized by the foe."

He concluded by informing his hearers that " the despot who has brought Russia to the brink of ruin will either abdicate of his free will or be deposed." He added that the Grand Duke Michael would be appointed Regent. This announcement was the spark to the explosion. The Petrograd Soviet at once demanded a republic, and for an hour or two it seemed as if the new Government would disappear in the horrors of a commune. The situation was saved by Kerenski. He went straightway to the Soviet meeting, and broke into its heated debate. " Comrades," he cried, " I have been appointed Minister of Justice. No one is a more ardent republican than I ; but we must bide our time. Nothing can come to its full growth at once. We shall have our republic, but we must first win the war, and then we can do what we will. The need of the moment is organization and discipline, and that need will not wait." His candour and earnestness carried the day. The Soviet passed a resolution in support of the Provisional Government by a majority of 1,000 to 15, and the new régime entered upon office.

But it was clear that the arrangement made by Guchkov in the royal train at Pskov could not stand. Late on the night of Thursday, the 15th, a deputation, led by Prince Lvov, and including Kerenski, sought out the Grand Duke Michael, and informed him that the people demanded that he should renounce the Regency, and relegate all powers to the Provisional Government until a Constituent Assembly could decide upon the future. The Grand Duke bowed to fate, and on the morning of Friday, the 16th, there was issued a declaration in his name which rang the knell of the Romanov dynasty. " I am firmly resolved," so it ran, " to accept the Supreme Power only if this should be the desire of our great people, who must, by means of a plebiscite through their representatives in the Constituent Assembly, establish the form of Government and the new fundamental laws of the Russian State. Invoking God's blessing, I therefore request all citizens of Russia to obey the Provisional Government, set up on the initiative of

the Duma, and invested with plenary powers, until, within as short a time as possible, the Constituent Assembly, elected on a basis of equal, universal, and secret suffrage, shall enforce the will of the nation regarding the future form of the constitution."

This was on Friday, 16th March. A week before Protopopov had been in power, and his police had been established in every corner of Petrograd; the patient bread queues had been waiting in the streets; and the rank and fashion of the capital had been thronging to the Alexander Theatre. Now these things were as if they had never been. The sacred monarchy had disappeared, the strongholds of reaction had been obliterated as if by a sponge, and agitators, but lately lurking in dens and corners and dreading the sight of a soldier, were now leading Guards regiments under the red flag and dictating their terms to grand dukes and princes. No more dramatic *peripeteia* was ever witnessed in the chequered history of human government.

The fall of the Emperor was received among the Allies with a divided mind. Even those who acclaimed the revolution, and recognized the inadequacy of the Imperial rule, could not view without some natural regret the fate of a man who since the first day of the war had been scrupulously loyal to the Alliance; who, as was proved by his initiation of the Hague conferences, had many generous and far-sighted ideals; and who, on the admission of all who knew him, was in character mild, courteous, and humane. Moreover, in the West there is always a lingering sentiment for disinherited kings—a sentiment sprung of that intense historic imagination which is the birthright of France and Britain. *Il garde au cœur les richesses stériles d'un grand nombre de rois oubliés.* Hence it was with some surprise that Western observers watched the utter eclipse of that Tsardom, which they had been taught to regard as something intertwined with the fibre of Russian folk-thought and religion. But among a people so heterogeneous and so little integrated by a common educational standard, such sudden reversals of thought were not unnatural. The Russian mind remained as before, loyal to its own peculiar mysticism, but the ideal of a thing called liberty could supplant with ease the ideal of a paternal king. A race which had so little visualizing power among its mental furniture was not the stuff of which impassioned royalists were made.

The House of Romanov may be said in one sense to have deserved its fate. It had allowed itself to become an anachronism

in the modern world, a mediæval fragment in line neither with the bludgeoning German absolutism nor the freedom of Italy and Britain. A stronger man than Nicholas might have established an efficient autocracy with the complete assent of his people; a wiser man could have transformed the Tsardom into a constitutional kingship. But for either change a stalwart soul and a penetrating mind were required, and Nicholas was not cast in that mould. He wavered between the two alternatives, and was incapable of the sustained intellectual effort necessary to follow either course. His sympathies were, on the whole, liberal; but he was easily swayed by his entourage, and especially by his wife. He did not blunder from lack of warning. The Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovitch told him the truth the preceding Christmas, and was banished for his pains. "Your first impulse and decision are always remarkably true and right. But as soon as other influences supervene you begin to waver, and your ultimate decisions are not the same." History can only regard that gentle, ineffective, tragically fated soul with tenderness and compassion. He was born to a destiny too difficult; his very virtues—his loyalty, his mercifulness—contributed to his undoing. The worst influence was the wife whom he deeply loved. The Empress Alexandra Feodorovna will be remembered with Henrietta Maria of England and Marie Antoinette of France as an instance of a devoted queen who dethroned her consort. In her eyes popular leaders were no more than traitors, to whom she hoped some day to give short shrift. She was possessed with whimsies about divine right, and her one object in life was to hand on the Russian crown to her son with no atom of its glory diminished. Her shallow mind, played upon by every wind of superstition, was incapable of distinguishing true men from false, or of discerning the best means of realizing her ambitions. In the end she had so surrounded herself and her husband with rogues and charlatans that the Court stank in the nostrils of decent citizens, and when it was assailed there was none to defend it. The autocracy collapsed from its own inherent rottenness. The revolt succeeded not because it was well planned and brilliantly led, for there was neither plan nor leading. It won because there was no opposition. The old order ended at the first challenge, for it had become mere lath and plaster.

The revolution triumphed in a week, and at a cost of human life far lower than any other movement of the same magnitude had ever shown. So, at any rate, it seemed to Western observers;

but the view was scarcely accurate. What happened was a *coup d'état*, supported by nearly all the troops, and such strokes are usually swift and bloodless. The real revolution was yet to come; on Friday, 16th March, it had scarcely begun. The cause of its immediate success was the adhesion of the Army, for a Government must collapse when it can no longer depend on its own armed forces. The decision as to who inspired it is more difficult. Without the Duma, the only nucleus of government, the business would have marched at once into naked chaos; there would have been a commune in Petrograd, and probably in other cities; and it is certain that the Army would not have been united, the great commanders would not have accepted the change, and presently there would have been civil war. At the same time, without the driving force of the working classes of the capital it is possible that the revolution would have ended in a barren compromise. The Duma had not the power of free initiative. Even the Provisional Committee contained too many types of political thought to enable it to speak with a clear voice. Its moderate elements, the men who understood the mechanism of government, were the men who had already failed in the struggle with the autocracy. Even a strong man like Guchkov, who had laboured hard to provide munitions for the army, had found his work hampered and nullified. The taint of failure was on them all, and the public mind turned naturally to the extremists, who had never sought to work with the old régime, who had never ceased to preach a root-and-branch destruction. Revolutions are violent things, and their first result must always be to give a hearing to the fanatic rather than to the *politique*. The prestige and the initiative lay with the impromptu organization of the Petrograd proletariat.

The dominant fact was that a great gap had been created, and that the gap must be filled. There were two rival theories as to the method and the principles to be followed—that of the constitutionalists and that of the extremists. The former, who were represented by the Provisional Government formed on 15th March, realized that Russia was in the throes of a great war, and that some kind of stable administration was needed without an hour's delay. There were all shades of opinion in their ranks, for some would have preferred to maintain the dynasty under new constitutional restrictions, while others were ready to accept a republic; but all were practical men who were willing to jettison their pet theories and look squarely at facts. Their aim was a Committee of Public Safety, which would guide Russia to peace, and then,

with fuller knowledge and ampler leisure, prepare a constitution, as Alexander Hamilton had prepared a constitution for the United States after freedom had been won. The Premier, Prince Lvov, was a specialist in local government, a man who had busied himself not with political speculation but with instant practical needs. Miliukov and Shingarev were of the same cast of mind as somewhat doctrinaire British Liberals; Guchkov—to continue the British parallel—was a moderate Conservative; Terestchenko was a rich and enlightened employer of labour, a Tory democrat; Vladimir Lvov was a Liberal country gentleman. Their following lay in the professional classes, the business men, the country gentry, and the *bourgeoisie*. They alone in Russia had any understanding of foreign politics and of the main problems of the war. They represented all the store of administrative experience which the country possessed. Worthy, honest, and patriotic, they had kept flying the banner of a reasonable freedom during the dark days; but they had failed in the past to achieve reform, and the memory of that failure clung to them. They were not by nature makers of revolutions. They lacked the fiery appeal, the daimonic personality, which awes and attracts great masses of men. Logical, capable, intensely respectable, they were also a little dull. They were wholly right in their perception of the needs of their country; but when an excited populace is clamouring for a new heaven and a new earth, it will not be greatly attracted by a plan for stable government. Moreover, the very blackness of the old régime seemed to demand a sensational and violent reversal. "So foul a sky clears not without a storm."

The extremists of the Council of Workmen and Soldiers represented a far narrower class. They stood for the working population of Petrograd, and in a lesser degree for industrial Russia; but Russia was not a highly industrialized country, and the workmen were a mere handful compared with the many millions of the peasantry. The rank and file were profoundly ignorant on all questions of government, and the leaders were little better. Their strength lay in the fact that they preached a creed which was the antithesis of all that had gone before, and which combined ideals that were capable of appealing both to a narrow class interest and to the generous and imaginative side of the Russian mind. Moreover they were in Petrograd, at the centre of affairs, and they were vocal, while other sections were dumb. Many of them were sensible men, who saw that victory in the war was essential to the safeguarding of their new-won freedom, and who had a wider

outlook in political matters than the interests of one class. But even the best of them were inexperienced in public affairs. It is not easy for those who have long been compelled to work in the dark to come suddenly into the full glare of responsibility. With the best will in the world there must be a certain jealousy, a certain suspicion, a certain *mauvaise honte* due to the strangeness of it all. Precious time was wasted in the discussion of half-baked ideals when the nation cried out for action. Discipline, the supreme need in war, is hard to come at in a debating society. But the gravest peril arose from the intractable minority, whose leaders, willingly assisted by Germany, were even then speeding to the storm centre across Europe in locked and shuttered railway carriages, like some new secret munition of war. In a time of confusion the wildest creed is often the most acceptable, and these men had a method in their madness, and could play cunningly on the weakness of a sorely-tried and most malleable people. Some were beyond doubt in German pay; the majority were as honest as they were perverse. But unhappily in times of stress the rogue is not more dangerous than the fool.

The first news of the *coup d'état* enheartened and inspired every ally of Russia. It seemed as if the deadweight which had clogged her efforts was now removed. She had been a giant with one arm shackled, but now she had the full use of her limbs. Corruption and favouritism, which had weakened her mighty purpose, would flourish no longer in the clear air of freedom. She was now wholly in line with the other democracies, and the old suspicion of an autocracy, which had always existed in some degree in Britain and America, was dispelled from the minds of her well-wishers. Her revolution had been swiftly and completely carried out with the assistance of the Army. More than a century before, the soldiers of revolutionary France had scattered their enemies. Would not the same be true of the soldiers of revolutionary Russia?

These hopes were based on false analogies. Russia had gained freedom, but she was not yet confirmed in it. If the revolution was to endure, the war against Germany must be won, and any cataclysmic change, however beneficent in its ultimate effect, must weaken her fighting strength in the immediate present. The extremists, who, if they did not make the *coup d'état*, were its loudest propagandists, were admittedly anti-national; not like the extremists of the French Revolution, who never lost their nationalist character. Moreover, the former were avowed pacificists,

while the latter preached every folly but a hollow peace. The former wished to end one war to begin another; and while there might be little enthusiasm for the second part of their programme, the first had a dangerous appeal to a people who had lost heavily of its manhood, and had suffered for two and a half years the most grievous privations. In the villages, according to one observer at the time, "the commonest record is that, of a number of adult brothers, only one is left still at the front, and sending home what money he can (a soldier's pay is three roubles a month); the families of all club together. The work of the fields is done by women. Any man fit to return to the line does so, some of them five or six times. Everywhere, in numbers unheard of in any other war, are to be seen helpless cripples, bringing home to all who see them the horrors of modern armaments and the present struggle." To a nation which had suffered thus, and which was essentially peace-loving and humane and without a tincture of military pride, immediate peace buttressed by vague formulas about the *status quo ante*, and "no annexations or indemnities," had an uncanny charm. They did not understand the phrases, but they liked the sound, and owing to the lack of popular education they were unable to read the deeper meaning of the war. Already the Council of Workmen and Soldiers were extolling the maxim of "peace without annexations or indemnities"—no invention of their own, but a phrase borrowed from the Zimmerwald manifesto of September 1915, signed by the Russian Lenin and the Swiss Robert Grimm. What could the Russian peasant make of foreign words like *contributsia* and *annexia*? He thought the first the name of a town which ought not to be surrendered, and the second the name of a fifth daughter of the Emperor! * But if they meant peace he would shout for them, and in the next breath he would shout for the liberation of Belgium and Serbia, which meant a victorious war. It all spelled confusion and bewilderment and irresolution.

The case was still graver with the army. The Russian army did not need to be democratized; it was already the most democratic force in the world. Relations between officers and men were almost uniformly excellent. But it was not a highly disciplined army; for, being spread out on a long, thin line, with sometimes no more than 150 men to the mile, the commanders had not the troops under their hand. It was a superb field for propaganda, and the Council of Workmen and Soldiers, seeing in it the only hope of

* A pamphlet was published in Petrograd in these days called the *Revolutionary Pocket Dictionary*, purporting to expound the new terminology, and of over a hundred words explained only six were Russian!

reaction, resolved to "democratize" the Army in their own peculiar fashion. Hundreds of emissaries were dispatched, and there was no one to say them nay. Already a carnival of loose talk was beginning. The men were told that the officers were bloodsuckers and tyrants, when they had looked upon them as friends. The glib formulas of the demagogues were preached to audiences which had not the education to judge them truly. The Army whose influence had made the *coup d'état* was the one hope for the establishment of a stable government, had there been some one with sufficient authority to veto this crazy electioneering. But military discipline is a delicate plant, and to set up the hustings in the field has before this wrecked many a gallant force.* Those who loved and admired the Russian soldier, and regarded his campaigns as the summit of mortal heroism and endurance, saw with consternation his exposure to this incredible trial. He was called to debate in his ignorance on the foundations of statecraft in the presence of a vigilant enemy.

A revolution may at the outset be the work of many; but its establishment is usually the task of one man—a Cæsar, a Cromwell, a Napoleon. Among the extremists there was no such man, for in the nature of things he must not be extreme; he may dream dreams and see visions, but he must have an iron hand and a clear eye for realities. In the respectable circle of the Duma statesmen, competent, honest, brilliant even, he seemed to be lacking. Guchkov was the nearest approach; but Guchkov had no magnetism to compel a following, and the man of destiny must be a *trait d'union* between the practical administrators and the masses. One figure alone seemed to stand out from the others—a young man barely thirty-five, the son of a Siberian schoolmaster, hitherto an obscure Petrograd lawyer, and a somewhat flamboyant orator in Labour circles. His haggard white face and melancholy eyes showed his bodily frailty, and indeed he was one who walked very close to death. In the first stage of the revolution Alexander Kerenski played boldly. Himself a strong republican and a staunch socialist, he seemed to recognize that a country cannot be saved by ideals alone, and to gird himself for the rough work of construction. His fervent speeches kept the new Provisional Government

* Here is Gourko's experience with the Armies of the West: "The most important was the 'Meeting of the Whole Front,' with delegates from all units, about 1,500 altogether. . . . Then followed gatherings of doctors, of Sisters of Charity, Red Cross societies, elementary teachers of the Minsk district, military priests, a Polish meeting, a White Russian meeting, meetings of veterinaries and chemists."—*Russia in 1914–17*, p. 285.

from being wrecked at the start, and he had his way alike with the elder statesmen of the Duma and the firebrands and amateurs of the Workmen's Council. Here, so at the moment it seemed, was a "swallower of formulas," a second Mirabeau. Would he die, like Mirabeau, before he could guide the revolution aright? Would he faint by the wayside, baffled by problems too great for mortal solution, and handicapped by the trammels of his old environment? Or would he live to lead his people beyond the wilderness to the Promised Land?

CHAPTER LXXIII.

THE NEW GOVERNMENT IN BRITAIN.

December 19, 1916–*May* 2, 1917.

Mr. Lloyd George—The War Cabinet—Problems of Men, Food, and Raw Materials —The British Finances—Labour.

THE new Ministry in Britain entered upon office faced by a host of vexatious and intricate problems. Rumania had been overrun, and was now making a last stand on the lines of the Sereth. Greece was in a state of naked chaos. In Russia the incompetence of the bureaucracy was now grossly apparent. The campaign in the West had reached the apparent stagnation which comes with mid-winter, and in consequence the attention of the people was diverted to domestic criticism. The peace overtures of Germany and President Wilson's Note had produced a situation which called for a wary and patient diplomacy. At home the increased activity of the German submarines had raised acutely the question of food and supplies. The need of men for the army was more urgent than ever if the strategic purpose of the forces in the field was not to be compromised. But the new Government had one clear advantage. It had been accepted by the people as a Government of action, and the country at large was prepared to make any effort which it should direct. It was in the eyes of most men a "business Government," an executive committee of the whole nation. Hence when, in his first speech in the House of Commons on December 19, 1916, the new Prime Minister sketched a programme of large and drastic measures, his demands were willingly granted. He summoned the country to a national Lent, an honourable competition in sacrifice. He asked that every available acre should be used for the production of food, and that the overconsumption of the rich should be cut down to the compulsory level of the poor. He proposed a system of immediate national service for war. He announced that the Government would com-

plete their control over mines and shipping. He warned his hearers that such as gave their trust to the new administration in the hope of a speedy victory would be doomed to disappointment—that there was a long and difficult road still to travel before victory was won. But his tone was one of grave yet buoyant confidence; and he gave a new encouragement to those who believed that the resources of the whole Empire should be mobilized by his promise to summon at an early date an Imperial War Conference. The country looked kindly at his committee of experts, and was ready to grant them a fair field for their energy. Few Ministries have ever entered upon office accompanied by a more general goodwill.

The linch-pin of the coach was the Prime Minister, and with his accession to the highest place the world became more fully cognizant of one of the most remarkable and potent figures in modern history. His pre-war record had shown that he had unsurpassed demagogic talents, and that rarer gift, a sense of political atmosphere. He might err in his ultimate judgments, but rarely in his immediate intuitions; if his strategy was often erroneous, his tactics were seldom at fault. He had been accused both by colleagues and opponents of lack of principle, for in truth he cared little for dogma, and distrusted the Whig code, so far as he troubled himself to understand it. His interest was not in doctrine but in life, and his quick sense of reality made him at heart an opportunist—one who loved the persistency of facts, and was prepared to select, if need be, from the repertory of any party. This elasticity, combined with his high political courage, rendered him even in his bitterest campaigns not wholly repugnant to his opponents. He was always human, and had nothing of the dogmatic rigidity, the lean spiritual pride of the elder Liberalism.

In December 1916 Mr. Lloyd George was but partially revealed to his countrymen and to the world, but enough was known to make it clear that he had great assets for the task. He was a born coalitionist, sitting always loose to parties; a born war minister, for strife was his element; and a born leader of a democracy. Of democracy, indeed, both in its strength and weakness, he was more than a representative—he was a personification. He had its fatal facility in general ideas, its sentimentality, its love of picturesque catchwords; and he had also its incongruous realism in action. Devotees of consistency were driven mad by his vagaries, for a tyrant or an oligarchy may be consistent, but not a free people. He had a democracy's short memory, and brittle personal

loyalties. Perhaps his supreme merit as a popular leader was his comprehensibility. No atmosphere of mystery surrounded his character or his talents. The qualities and the defects of both were evident to all, and the plain man found in them something which he could himself assess—positive merits, positive weaknesses—so that he could give or withhold his confidence as if he were dealing with a familiar friend. This power of producing a sense of intimacy among millions who have never seen his face or heard his voice is the greatest of assets for a democratic statesman, and Mr. Lloyd George had it not only for Britain but for all the world. He was a living figure everywhere—as well known in France as M. Briand, an intelligible character in America as much as Mr. Roosevelt or Mr. Wilson. A reputation such as Mr. Balfour's or Mr. Asquith's was a local thing which grew dim beyond the seas; but Mr. Lloyd George's was like an electric current whose strength was scarcely lessened by transmission over great distances. When he spoke he was understood by the whole round earth. His speeches made exactly the appeal which he intended, whether heard in London or read in Paris and Petrograd. He used a universal tongue, and his cardinal strength lay in this universality, in his abounding share of a common humanity. It is a rare and happy gift, and while it has been possessed by certain artists and thinkers, it has been the endowment of but few statesmen.

Apart from this special genius, his most notable qualities seemed, at the moment of taking office, to be his courage and energy. His physical appearance was a clue to the man; the thickset figure, the deep chest, the bright, wary swordsman's eye—all spoke of an ebullient and inexhaustible life. As the months passed critics were to be found to depreciate his wisdom, his honesty, even his valour, but no man ever denied his vitality. He was exhilarated rather than depressed by misfortunes, even though he might be also a little frightened. His strength was that he overflowed at all times with zest and interest and passion. The Allied cause now made the same emotional appeal to him that the handicaps and sufferings of the poor had made in earlier days. He was not only energetic himself, but an inspirer of energy in others. Like a gadfly he stung all his environment to life. He was inordinately quick at grasping the essentials of a problem, and with him the deed did not wait long on the thought. His well-wishers were less certain whether this instinct for action was combined with an equal sagacity in counsel and prescience in judgment, for it is a rule of mortality

that the considering brain and the active will are not commonly found together in the same being. It was not enough that such a man should choose able colleagues, for his temperamental dominance was so strong that the subtlest and shrewdest of advisers would be apt to be dragged along at his impetuous chariot wheels. It was clear that he would not falter in the race ; but there was the risk that his fine ardour might be sometimes wasted through misdirection, and that paths might be chosen in haste which would have to be abandoned at leisure.

He was above all things the inspirer and comforter of the nation through the medium of the spoken word. As an orator he was in a unique position. There have been many greater speakers —men who have had at their disposal a more complete armoury of all the weapons of rhetoric and debate—but there have been few indeed who have had his specific talent. He had not the golden eloquence of Lord Rosebery, rich in historical allusion and imagery ; or Mr. Balfour's architectural power, which made each part of the argument fall into its place with a mathematical precision ; or the austere elevation, like that of the English Bible, which is found in the best speeches of Abraham Lincoln. His oratory was altogether less accomplished, the product of a native talent rather than of a laborious apprenticeship. At its worst it was merely noisy, the robustious hammer-and-tongs business of the hustings. In its average quality it was homely, vigorous, hard-hitting, and usually effective, giving the ordinary man something he could readily understand, and providing the answer to his opponents which the ordinary man desired to give. It was platitudinous, but often witty and invariably picturesque. But there were moments when it became poetry, a rare and exquisite music which lingered on the air like an old song, and transformed the dusty arena of politics as a sunset transfigures a dingy landscape. Such passages * were usually illustrations drawn from some episode of the natural world or some recollection of boyhood. They were never recondite ; but their use was so apt, their presentation so beautiful, that they came to the mind of his

* Take such a passage as this from his speech at Carnarvon on February 3, 1917, spoken among the Welsh hills towards the close of a bitter winter :—

"There are rare epochs in the history of the world when in a few raging years the character, the destiny of the whole race is determined for unknown ages. This is one. The winter wheat is being sown. It is better, it is surer, it is more bountiful in its harvest than when it is sown in the soft springtime. There are many storms to pass through, there are many frosts to endure, before the land brings forth its green promise. But let us not be weary in well-doing, for in due season we shall reap if we faint not."

hearers with the shock of a revelation. It was simplicity itself, but it was the simplicity of genius ; and, save in a few rare utterances of Cromwell, the history of British oratory may be searched in vain for a parallel. And because it was poetry its appeal was world-wide, for true poetry knows no frontiers of race or tongue.

The machinery which the Prime Minister had announced on his accession to office seemed at first sight adequate to his purpose. The old Cabinet of twenty-three had been too large and cumbrous ; it had met infrequently, and it had kept no minutes. The special War Committee which existed had been too informal and too ill-defined in its powers to be effective. Mr. Lloyd George's War Cabinet was five in number, and only one of its members, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, had the cares of a heavy department to distract him. This body of five had their hands free to direct the management of the campaigns. They were picked men who brought to the common stock a great endowment of consultative and executive competence. Mr. Arthur Henderson was a Labour leader with a wide knowledge of the mind of the British workers, and he had the patience and sagacity and unrhetorical patriotism of the best type of his class. Mr. Bonar Law was a business man with a high reputation for practical ability, and his remarkable skill in debate made him an admirable exponent of policy in Parliament. Lord Curzon had been the most successful Viceroy of India since Dalhousie. Lord Milner had been the civilian leader in a long and difficult war, and had borne the weight of the reconstruction of South Africa. All who had ever worked with him were aware that he possessed administrative talents which were probably not equalled by any contemporary Englishman. And at the head of this distinguished junta was Mr. Lloyd George, with his magnetic energy and his quick imagination. It seemed on paper an ideal arrangement for the conduct of the campaigns. It was a proof of the elasticity of the British Constitution that a wholly novel machinery could come into being at once without legislative sanction, without debate in Parliament or in the country, on the authority of one man.

But those who examined the scheme closely, while fully alive to its merits, saw certain dangers in the near future. The new War Cabinet was the only Cabinet. The other members of the Ministry were departmental heads, without opportunity for consultation or collective decision except in so far as they might be summoned to attend the War Cabinet at odd meetings. But the British Constitution is based on collective resolutions and collective

responsibility. Again, while the major business was the war, the normal government of the country had to be carried on ; important decisions must be taken in such matters as finance, education, and labour, which might be purely domestic in character, but which required the assent of the whole Government ; and even in internal affairs many questions might bear a war complexion. Hence it seemed certain that the War Cabinet would not only have to perform the special functions for which it was created, but to do the work of the old Cabinet as well. In practice its membership could not be limited to five, for other Ministers would require to be constantly in attendance ; and in practice it could not confine itself to problems directly arising out of the war, but must include in its province the whole government of Britain. Finally, one of Mr. Lloyd George's first acts was to create a number of new departments—Shipping Control, National Service, Food Control, Pensions—which were not branches of old departments, but directly responsible to the War Cabinet itself. It looked as if the committee of five might be swamped with endless matters of detail, referred to them because there was no other mode of reference.

At first, however, the danger was not pressing, and the War Cabinet, sitting in almost continuous session, endeavoured to draw together the threads of war administration. It showed courage and energy in grappling both with internal and foreign problems. The Prime Minister went to Paris and Rome, Lord Milner was dispatched to Russia, conferences of the Allies became frequent, and—most vital of all—a War Conference of the British Empire was called for the early spring. This conference took the form of a temporary enlargement of the War Cabinet, the Dominions Prime Ministers or their representatives and the Indian delegates being included for the purpose in its membership. It was the eighth conference of the Empire which had been held since the first Jubilee Conference of 1887. At the earlier ones the main questions discussed had been imperial defence, imperial reciprocity, and imperial consolidation ; but the vital question of co-operation in war had not been seriously raised till the conference of 1909. It had been developed at the Coronation Conference of 1911, when Sir Edward Grey took the representatives of the Dominions into his confidence on matters of foreign policy. But up to the outbreak of hostilities these deliberations had not resulted in the devising of any real machinery for united effort. The old doctrine of a loose partnership of self-governing peoples held its ground—a friendly partnership based on frequent consultations, but a partnership in which

the main burden both of responsibility and of action lay upon Britain herself. The war had wholly changed the outlook both of the Mother Country and of the Dominions. Co-operation in the field, in finance, and in all forms of war activity had become a tremendous reality. But the machinery of co-operation was still faulty. The conduct of the campaigns and of foreign policy still rested exclusively with the British Government. This would have been well enough had the Dominions' contribution been made merely out of loyalty and friendship for the parent land. But that was not the main motive. Australian and Canadian, New Zealander and South African fought side by side with British troops, not primarily in defence of Britain but in defence of their own homelands, and on behalf of those ideals of civilization and international honour which they realized to be the only securities for their future freedom and peace. Hence there must be co-operation not only in effort but in the direction of that effort, and from this practical and responsible partnership in the conduct of war there must follow a true partnership in the conduct of peace. The Prime Minister was under no delusion. " You do not suppose that the overseas nations can raise and place in the field armies containing an enormous proportion of their best manhood, and not want to have a say, and a real say, in determining the use to which they are to be put. . . . Up to the present the British Government has shouldered the responsibility for the policy of the war practically alone. It now wishes to know that in its measures for prosecuting the war to a finish, and in its negotiations for peace, it will be carrying out a policy agreed upon by the representatives of the whole Empire sitting in council together. . . . Of this I am certain : the peoples of the Empire will have found a unity in the war such as never existed before it—a unity not only in history but of purpose. . . . Do you tell me that the peoples who have stood together and staked everything in order to bring about the liberation of the world are not going to find some way of perpetuating that unity afterwards on an equal basis ? "

The first great problem which the new Ministry had to face was the need for men. The requirements of the Army were growing, and it was calculated that, to keep the forces in the field up to the strength required by the strategic purposes of the High Command, 200,000 extra men must be found before the end of the summer. In March 1917 Mr. Bonar Law told the House of Commons that since the beginning of the year recruits had fallen

short of the number estimated by 100,000. To meet the demand, a comprehensive new examination of discharged and rejected persons was undertaken which would enable the military authorities to deal with a million men. Such a "combing out" involved many hardships. The doctors, acting under urgent War Office instructions, were inclined to be liberal in their view of what constituted physical efficiency, and thousands who had been hitherto rejected or placed in a low class found themselves passed for general service. In the same way the tribunals were slow to grant exemptions, and pleas which a year before had been allowed were now summarily dismissed. The principle was undoubtedly right—that every man fit to be in the fighting line should go there unless his services were required for national work of equal importance at home. But the word "fit" was far too loosely construed: men were drafted into the line who retired to hospital after the first week of service, and thereby increased the cost of our army without adding one atom to its strength. Side by side with this purely military scheme there was established an organization for national civilian service, similar to that set up in Germany the previous autumn. The idea was sound—to find substitutes for men engaged in vital industries and in military service by calling in men over age or debarred by some physical handicap from fighting. The country was split up into recruiting areas, and an appeal was made for volunteers, both men and women. An attempt was made to compile a great register in which should be set down the ability of each volunteer for the different branches of national work. Unfortunately the mechanism was cumbrously devised, and volunteers were demanded before any scheme for their utilization had been framed. The result was that men and women were kept waiting indefinitely, or hastily assigned to incongruous tasks.

The National Service Department, much criticized and labouring amid hopeless difficulties, did something to ease the situation, but it cannot be said to have realized the aim of its promoters. The scheme of the military authorities, on the other hand, secured large numbers of men; but it involved so many mistakes that during the spring and summer it had to be constantly revised. Many of the blunders were so glaring that they inspired an unpleasant sense of insecurity and injustice among the people. It was too often forgotten that, having grafted compulsion upon our old voluntary plan, we had thereby improvised a system far less scientific and equitable than that which existed in conscript countries. Many thousands had volunteered in the early days

of the war who under a proper scheme would have remained at home, and consequently our later compulsory methods could not be applied in a fair field. For a sedentary man of forty, with a family and a business depending on his own efforts, to be hurried into the ranks was a very real hardship, which the sight of multitudes of young men reserved for so-called vital industries did not tend to alleviate. The country, recognizing the urgent necessity of the case, bore the anomalies with amazing good humour, and that the protests were on the whole so few spoke volumes for the patience and patriotism of the nation.

Scarcely less urgent was the supply of food and raw materials which the success of the unrestricted German submarine campaign forced into prominence. In a later chapter we shall consider the features of that campaign; here it is sufficient to note its results upon our domestic policy. On February 23, 1917, the Prime Minister informed the House of Commons that the ultimate success of the Allies depended, in his opinion, on solving the tonnage difficulties with which they were confronted. New restrictions were imposed on all imports not essential to the prosecution of the war. Certain forms of non-essential home production, such as brewing and distilling, were rigorously cut down. A great effort was made to increase the building of new standardized merchant ships. Home production was stimulated in such matters as timber and iron ore, and notably in the provision of food supplies. In order to extend agricultural effort, farmers were guaranteed certain minimum prices for wheat and oats and potatoes, that they might be induced to put pastoral lands under crop; a minimum wage was fixed for agricultural labour; and landlords were forbidden to raise rents except with the consent of the Board of Agriculture. These and many other schemes were aimed at the conservation and increase of Britain's economic strength; for it was realized that the enemy was directing against it his most serious attack, and that a long and stern struggle lay before the nation. A kind of practical communism came into being. No national asset could any longer be kept under unrestricted private management if the strength of Britain was to be mobilized for war; and State interference reached a height which three years before would have staggered the most clamorous socialist. An example was the Government control of all coal mines, which came into force in February 1917. The truth was that Britain was blockaded, and her policy must be that of a beleaguered city. Germany was in the same position, and the world saw the astounding result of

two sets of belligerents each reduced by the other to a condition of economic stringency, the one by above-water and the other by under-water naval operations. At the same time there could be no comparison between the kinds of stringency. In Mr. Lloyd George's phrase, there was a vast difference between privation and deprivation; and the former had been for some time the lot of Germany, but was still unknown in Britain.

The food problem, which was the one which affected most notably the ordinary man, was dealt with by a set of curious measures, which included experiments not always well considered. Mr. Runciman, the President of the Board of Trade under the former Government, had begun in November 1916 with the adoption of a form of "standard" bread, and with certain restrictions on the meals served in restaurants. When Lord Devonport became Food Controller, he found the position with regard to the grain supply very serious, and by a multiplicity of orders, culminating in the Government control of all the chief flour mills, he endeavoured to prevent the waste of food stuffs. Stocks of sugar were also short, and during the first half of the year 1917 there was a very great dearth of potatoes. In February he appealed to patriotic households to accept a voluntary scale of rations, and the Royal Proclamation of 2nd May urged the nation to a united campaign of food economy. Apart from restrictions of consumption, there was a general attempt on the part of householders who had access to the land, whether in the shape of gardens or allotments, to increase the food supplies by the planting of potatoes and other vegetables. Shortage was followed by high prices, which bore heavily on the poorer classes, and were attributed by many to the "profiteering" of the large dealers. Lord Devonport's sporadic efforts to control these prices were attended with no great success; and the matter was not firmly handled till he had retired and given place to Lord Rhondda, the former President of the Local Government Board, who by his vigorous administration gave the country assurance that such high prices as remained were the inevitable effects of war and not of private greed.

The first financial measure of the new Government was a gigantic loan, which was expounded by the Chancellor of the Exchequer at a great meeting in the Guildhall. The amount was unlimited, and was to be raised in two issues: a 5 per cent. loan, issued at 95, and repayable at par on June 1, 1947; and a 4 per cent. loan, issued at par, and repayable on October 15, 1942. The interest on the first issue was subject to income tax, and the yield

was therefore £4, 2s. 3d. per cent. ; the interest of the second was free from tax. A sinking fund was instituted of 1¾ per cent. per annum. The Four and a Half per cent. War Loan and Five and Six per cent. Exchequer Bond issues were convertible into the new loan at par, but there was no right of conversion into any future war loan. The scheme was methodically advertised, and when the lists closed on 16th February it was found that the loan had yielded in new money £1,000,000,000, which was £300,000,000 in excess of Mr. Bonar Law's provisional estimate. No such result had as yet been attained in any belligerent country, and the amount subscribed exceeded the combined results of the two previous British loans. There were no subscriptions from the banks, which were therefore left free to finance the general business of the country. Some 8,000,000 people had subscribed, as contrasted with Germany's highest figure of 4,000,000, though the population of Germany was 50 per cent. larger than that of Britain. A little later it was announced that the Government of India had agreed to subscribe £100,000,000 to the general expenditure of the war.

These heroic measures were needed, for the cost of the campaigns was rising rapidly. On 12th February the Chancellor of the Exchequer declared that the average daily expenditure had risen to £5,790,000—an increase of over a million a day since the beginning of the financial year. Such an increase was inevitable. There were now fourteen times as many troops on the different fronts as at the beginning of the war ; and, as compared with the average in the first year, the smallest increase among the different types of munitions was twenty-eight fold. The rate was soon to be greatly added to, for in the first nine weeks of the new financial year, 1917–18, the daily average had risen to £7,884,000. Mr. Bonar Law's first Budget, introduced in April, showed an actual deficit on the past year of £1,624,685,000, to be met out of loan money. His estimate for the year 1917–18 was an expenditure of £2,290,381,000 and a revenue of £638,600,000, leaving a deficit of £1,651,781,000. There were no new taxes, but a new revenue of £27,000,000 was estimated for, chiefly from the raising of the tobacco duty and the increase of the Excess Profits Tax from 60 to 80 per cent. The figures were so vast that the most vigilant of financial critics were struck dumb ; the thing was not *in pari materia* with anything in their past experience or even in their wildest imaginings. The State was contracting a colossal debt to its citizens ; but it was an internal indebtedness, and the worst difficulties concerning foreign payments were in process of being

solved by the entry of America into the war. Without that fortunate event the financial position of all the Allies would have been difficult in the extreme. Britain was expending her accumulated savings, but she had not yet trenched seriously upon the assets necessary for the production of her national income. Moreover, a growing part of her outlay was returning to her war chest. The campaign of the War Savings Committee, conducted quietly and persistently through the land, was not only bringing a considerable part of the high wages now current back to the use of the State, but was inculcating habits of thrift and investment in classes who might otherwise have been demoralized by the changed conditions of the world.

The opening of 1917 saw no change in the mass of British opinion concerning the war, save perhaps a certain hardening. The long struggle of the Somme had brought home to the nation the magnitude of the toil and the greatness of the needful sacrifices; and, as Germany's policy unfolded itself and as a fuller idea of her aims built itself slowly in the minds of those not given to reflect upon international politics, the conviction grew that no halfway house could be found between victory and defeat. The peace overtures of December 1916 did, it is true, induce the doubters to urge that a victory in the field was impossible, and that peace must be sought by negotiation, and the easily beguiled to cry out that there were signs in Germany of a change of heart, which it was the Allies' duty to encourage.* But of pacificism in the dangerous sense there were few signs, and the plea for "peace by negotiation" sprang in most cases from an error of head rather than of heart. In every great struggle there will be a certain class who in the name of democracy choose to set themselves against the tide of popular opinion, and out of a kind of spiritual and intellectual pride misread facts which are plain to less sophisticated souls. Such views are middle-class rather than popular; and they are found, not among those who are bearing the burden of the contest, but in the small minority who even in war contrive to lead a sheltered life.

But if there was no weakening in purpose, the country, as the third year of war drew to a close, was suffering beyond doubt from

* "The Bloodmen are a people that have their name derived from the malignity of their nature, and from the fury that is in them to execute it upon the town of Mansoul. . . . These people are always in league with the Doubters, for they jointly do make question of the faith and fidelity of the men of the town of Mansoul."—Bunyan's *Holy War*.

a high degree of war weariness. The revulsion from the hope of an early and dramatic close had plunged many into a dogged apathy. The losses on the Somme had been felt in every class, and very especially in those classes which had small military knowledge and could not view the campaign in a true perspective. It was remarked that in certain districts the temper of the people seemed to have lost its edge. They were resolute to go on to the end, but they had ceased to envisage that end, and were like a man towards the close of a day's journey who dully places one foot behind another without the sanguine enterprise of the morning hours. Workmen were weary with the strain of three years' overwork, and all were dazed with the long anxiety. The effect of staleness, which was to be noticed among troops who had been kept too long in the firing-line, was beginning to appear among the civilian population at home. It is the lesson of all wars: the stronger military force will win *pourvu que les civils tiennent.* But what had been an academic postulate in the early days of the campaign was now revealed as a most vital truth. The nation was determined to hold, but it realized that the endeavour might bring it very near to the limits of its strength.

The class which suffered most was the least vocal. In a struggle which called forth the best from all conditions of life it would be idle to compute degrees of sacrifice; but if one class were to be singled out as especially heroic, it would be what is commonly called the "lower middle"—the minor walks of commerce and the professions. A young man of the upper classes had, as a rule, a comfortable background behind him. The workman had his trade or craft to return to, and his separation allowance was generally sufficient to support his family in the mode of livelihood to which they had been accustomed. But take the man who had built up a little business by his own efforts, or had just won a footing in one of the professions. When he enlisted, he sacrificed all the results of his past toil; if he survived, he would have to start again from the beginning. The little shop or business was closed down, his professional chances disappeared. No separation allowance, no pay as a second-lieutenant, could keep up his home on the old scale of modest respectability. It was from this class, it should be remembered, that the bulk of the officers of the New Armies were drawn. For it there was no chance of exemption, for its work was not regarded as of national importance. It had no trade union to watch its interests, and no popular press to expound its hardships. But of all the many sacrifices to which

the nation was called it bore the heaviest share. It was a melancholy experience to walk through the fringes of an industrial town. In the artisan area life seemed to be going on as before. The streets in the daytime were full of women and children, and in the evening the fathers of families came back from work as in the times of peace. But in the "residential" quarters, where the rows of small villas housed the clerk, the shopkeeper, and the minor professions, every second house was closed. A section of society, which above all others prided itself on the little platform it had won in the struggle for life, saw its foundations destroyed.

The position of Labour during the early part of 1917 was to some small extent influenced by the Russian Revolution. War is a time when the whole world acquires a new sensitiveness, and the cataclysm in Russia made itself felt in remote quarters, as a great storm at sea will affect peaceful backwaters far up a tidal river. There were stirrings and questionings abroad which did not formulate themselves in any revolutionary creed, but gave a special edge to the existing labour difficulties. Continual minor disputes and occasional strikes were proof of a real unsettlement; but it was too often assumed that this was mainly due to a gang of unpatriotic agitators. Agitators there were who, taking advantage of the absence of responsible leaders, preached the cruder doctrines of syndicalism and the class war, and had a fair field owing to the fact that the Government did not organize counter propaganda. The ordinary Briton was accustomed to a good deal of public speaking; but the war had dried up the usual founts of political oratory, and the extremist was left to provide most of the talking. But the influence of the firebrand was strictly limited. The real cause of unrest—apart from the inevitable war weariness—was to be found in certain specific grievances and discontents. It is important to recognize that Labour had a good case, and did not make trouble out of mere selfish perversity.

The old charter of Trade Union rights had been abrogated during the war with the consent of the Unions. It was too often forgotten what this sacrifice entailed. In other countries less highly industrialized than Britain the land had remained as the sheet-anchor of the peasant. But in industrial Britain the workman was cut off from his ancient natural security, and had to seek an artificial defence. This he found in the rules of his Union, without which he was an economic waif unable to bargain on a fair basis. Hence he regarded any infringement of his Union rules as a weakening of the safeguards essential to his very ex-

istence. He consented to drastic alterations on the understanding that they were purely war measures ; but he was naturally jealous that the plea of military necessity should not be used to impair his ultimate rights, of which he stood as the trustee not only for himself but for his kinsmen in the trenches. Anything which seemed to point to a delay in the restitution of his old status after the war made him acutely uneasy ; and his suspicion was not lessened by foolish talk on the part of some employers about a complete revision of the industrial system involving the repeal of the Factory Acts and the Trade Disputes Act. It seemed to him that in defending his rights, as he conceived them, he was resisting Prussianism as much as the troops in the field. But in time of war, when new urgencies appeared with each day, it was hard for a Government to keep the strict letter of a contract with Labour. The British workman was not unreasonable, and when a fresh necessity was made clear to him he would usually accept it. But unfortunately the war had largely deprived him of the services of the men who might have done the explaining. His old leaders had been for the most part absorbed into the Government, and in the stress of heavy executive duties were unable to keep in close touch with their followers. Moreover, the mere sight of them as part of the official machine caused them to be regarded with a certain suspicion. The consequence was that a new type of leader came into prominence—younger and less responsible men, who took a stand not only against the Government but against the proper Trade Union officials. Of such a type were the shop stewards in the engineering trades. Originally they had been merely agents of the district committees ; but, since they were the only Union officials left in intimate contact with the men, they acquired new powers, and became the spokesmen of the workers not only against the State but against the Union executives. The strike of the engineers in May was organized in defiance of their Union by a self-elected committee of shop stewards. Finally, there was a very general suspicion of " profiteering." The men objected to sacrifice their Union rules in order, as they saw it, to swell the profits of private employers ; and they bore with impatience the high cost of living, because they suspected that private monopolies and corners played as large a part in producing it as the dislocation of war.

In handling this difficult situation the Government made frequent mistakes. The whole State organization was overworked, and there were many departmental delays in starting the agreed

machinery, and especially in adjudicating on differences between employers and employed. But the main sources of trouble in the May strikes were the withdrawal of the trade card scheme and the extension of dilution to private work. These two points demand a short explanation, for they were typical of the kind of disputes which, without discredit to both sides, were bound to arise. In order to prevent the confusion of work from the sudden calling up of skilled men, and to get rid of the suspicion that an employer could punish a man he disliked by declaring him no longer indispensable, the trade card scheme was approved in November 1916, under which every member of an engineering union was absolutely exempted from military service. It was obviously a bad arrangement, for it was hard to see why exemption should be based on membership of a particular Union and not on national utility; and other Unions, not thus protected, viewed the scheme with suspicion. When, early in 1917, the Army authorities began to press for more men, the Government, instead of trying to negotiate a fresh agreement, simply announced that the trade card scheme would terminate as from 1st May. The "dilution" question was even more delicate. The principle of dilution in munition work—which, be it remembered, involved the most sacred principle of the craft Unions—had been accepted by Labour in 1915, on the understanding that no dilution should be enforced in work other than war work. But the necessities of the Army, and the importance at the same time of keeping private industry alive, caused the Government to bethink itself of dilution in private work. In November 1916 it came to an arrangement with most of the Unions, but not with the engineers. Nevertheless it introduced the Munitions of War Bill, 1917, to give the Ministry of Munitions power "to carry into effect a scheme of dilution of skilled labour by the introduction of less skilled labour (both male and female) upon private work."

The result of these measures was that Labour did not know where it stood. Explicit pledges had been violated, and the explanations did not harmonize. The Ministry of Munitions declared that it only wanted to spread skilled men more evenly over the whole industrial system, and not to take them for the Army; but the military authorities made no secret of the fact that they expected to get large drafts from the engineering trades. There was the further grievance that the Chancellor of the Exchequer proposed to abolish the limitations originally placed on the profits of controlled establishments, and leave the employers subject only

to the Excess Profits Tax. The result of this atmosphere of suspicion was the outbreak of trouble in May in some thirty munition areas in defiance of the executives of the Unions. A quarter of a million men were affected, and the arrest of the chief strike leaders did not improve the situation. Ultimately the men were released, and an arrangement was reached with the strikers under which the Government made important concessions as to the obnoxious legislation which they had contemplated.

Incidents such as this showed the difficulties which attended co-operation between a Government, forced constantly by new needs into new measures, and Labour, suspicious of the intentions of the State, out of touch with its experienced leaders, and profoundly anxious about the future fate of those rights which it had temporarily surrendered. It may be doubted whether the making of a strike a punishable offence under the first Munitions of War Act in July 1915 was a wise step, for it deprived unrest of a natural outlet, and caused doubts to brood like mosquitoes on stagnant water. Yet, when all has been said, overt discontent was the exception and not the rule. There was no sounder patriotism or stauncher resolution anywhere in the Allied nations than among the workers of Britain. When we remember the strain and monotony of their toil, the innumerable grounds for suspicion open to them, and the blunders in tactics made, sometimes avoidably and sometimes unavoidably, by the Government, we may well conclude that the chief characteristic of British Labour during the war was not petulant unrest, but an amazing stamina and patience.

CHAPTER LXXIV.

THE BREAKING OF AMERICA'S PATIENCE.

January 22–April 6, 1917.

Effect on America of Germany's new Submarine Policy—Diplomatic Relations suspended—American Merchant Ships armed—The special Session of Congress—Mr. Wilson's Message—America declares War.

In earlier chapters we have examined the stages in the ripening of American opinion against the aims and methods of the Teutonic League. It was a slow process, for the great republic had a long road to travel from her historic isolation to the point of junction with the Allies in Europe. She had started with three principles which had always been the foundation of her policy. The first was the doctrine of Washington and Monroe—that she would not interfere in European disputes or entangle herself in any foreign alliance, and that her one external interest was to keep the New World free from foreign aggression. The second was that she would persistently labour to secure such a maritime code as would ensure to the whole world the freedom of the seas. For this purpose she had assisted Britain to clear out the Barbary pirates, and, save during the stress of her Civil War, she had leaned towards the doctrine of the inviolability of private property at sea, a generous free list, and a narrow definition of contraband. The third was an endeavour to substitute a judicial for a military settlement of disputes between nations. These principles of policy were very dear to her, and to a desire to safeguard them she added the hope that, if she could keep aloof from the war in Europe, she might be in a position at its close to take the lead in rebuilding a ruined world and healing the wounds of the nations.

But the American people were of Cromwell's opinion that "it is necessary at all times to look at facts." Slowly and with bitter disappointment they learned that isolation was not feasible; that there could be no freedom at sea unless they did their share

in winning freedom on land; that right instead of might could not be set on the throne of the earth unless they were willing to restrain the Power that worshipped force; that they could not bind up the wounds of the world until they compelled the oppressor to sheathe the sword. It was not always easy for the Allies to watch with patience the progress of this gradual disillusionment; it was so very gradual, apparently so blind to actualities, so much in love with the technicalities of a law which had been long since shattered. But the wiser statesmen in Europe saw that, behind the academic decorum of America, the forces of enlightenment were at work, and they possessed their souls in patience. For with a strong people a slow change is a sure change.

The initial atrocities in Belgium and France had induced in the greater part of the educated class in America the conviction that Germany was a menace to civilization. But such a conviction was still far removed from the feeling that America was called on to play an active part in the war. Her pride was first wounded by Germany's insistence that as a neutral the United States had no right to trade in munitions with the Allied Powers. The American view was well stated in the official presentation of America's case issued after she entered the struggle by the Committee of Public Information. "If, with all other neutrals, we refused to sell munitions to belligerents, we could never in time of a war of our own obtain munitions from neutrals, and the nation which had accumulated the largest reserves of war supplies in times of peace would be assured of victory. The militarist state that invested its money in arsenals would be at a fatal advantage over a free people that invested its money in schools. To write into international law that neutrals should not trade in munitions would be to hand over the world to the rule of the nation with the largest armament factories." Then came the sinking of the *Lusitania*, and the preposterous demand that America should surrender her right of free travel by sea. Concurrent with the prevarications and belated apologies of Berlin ran a campaign of German machination and outrages in the New World. To quote again from the same document: "In this country official agents of the Central Powers—protected from a criminal prosecution by diplomatic immunity—conspired against our internal peace, placed spies and *agents provocateurs* throughout the length and breadth of our land, and even in high positions of trust in departments of our Government. While expressing a cordial friendship for the people of the United States, the Government of Germany

had its agents at work both in Latin America and in Japan. They bought and subsidized papers and supported speakers there to arouse feelings of bitterness and distrust against us in those friendly nations, in order to embroil us in war. They were inciting to insurrection in Cuba, in Haiti, and in Santo Domingo; their hostile hand was stretched out to take the Danish Islands; and everywhere in South America they were abroad sowing the seeds of dissension, trying to stir up one nation against another, and all against the United States. In their sum these various operations amounted to direct assault of the Monroe doctrine."

The complicated negotiations between Washington and Berlin have already been described in these pages. When on May 4, 1916, Germany grudgingly promised that ships should not be sunk without warning, it seemed as if the controversy was settled. But meantime two currents of opinion in America had been growing in volume. One was the desire to make this war the last fought under the old bad conditions of national isolation, to devise a League to Enforce Peace, which would police the world on behalf of international justice. Of such ideals Mr. Wilson was a declared champion. The second was the conviction that this war was in very truth America's war; that the Allies were fighting for America's interests, the greatest of which was the maintenance of public right. To this creed Mr. Root and Mr. Roosevelt had borne eloquent testimony. In the light of it the various diplomatic wrangles with Britain over her naval policy became things of small moment. "As long as militarism continues to be a serious danger, peaceful neutral nations, by insisting on the emancipation of commerce from interference by sea-power, would be adopting a suicidal policy. . . . The control of commerce in war is now exercised by Great Britain because she possesses a preponderant navy. Rather than that control should be emasculated, Great Britain must be allowed to continue its exercise. . . . We are more than ever sure that this nation does right in accepting the British blockade and defying the submarine. It does right, because the war against Britain, France, and Belgium is a war against the civilization of which we are a part. To be *fair* in such a war would be a betrayal." *

The Presidential election in the autumn of 1916 caused public discussion on the question to languish, but it did not stop the steady growth of opinion. Then came the revival of German

* These quotations are taken from the American weekly paper, the *New Republic*, of August 7, 1915, and February 17, 1917.

submarine activity in the early winter, and the hectoring German peace proposals, which boasted so loudly of German conquests, and asked the world to accept them as the basis of all negotiations. Mr. Wilson, secure in power by his second election, and pledged to the ideal of a League of Nations, dispatched his own request to the belligerents to define their aims, for he saw very clearly that the hour of America's decision was drawing nigh. The interchange of notes which followed cleared the air, and established the fact that American and Allied opinion were moving in the same channels. On 22nd January the President, in an eloquent address to the Senate, outlined the kind of peace which America could guarantee. The area of agreement had been defined, and the essential difference was soon to leap into blinding clarity. For on 31st January, as we have seen, Germany tore up all her former promises, and informed Washington that she was about to enter upon an unrestricted submarine campaign.

The Rubicon had been reached, and there could be no turning back. The German Ambassador was handed his passports on 3rd February, and Mr. Gerard summoned from Berlin. On the same day the President announced to both Houses of Congress the severance of diplomatic relations with Germany. He showed by his speeches that he took the step unwillingly. He drew a distinction between the German people and the German Government—the old distinction to which idealists in democratic countries were apt to cling till facts forced them to relinquish it. He declared that he could not believe that the German Government meant "to do in fact what they have warned us they feel at liberty to do," and that only "actual overt acts" would convince him of their hostile purpose. But he ended with the solemn announcement that if American ships were sunk and American lives were lost he would come again to Congress and ask for power to take the necessary steps for the protection of his people.

The immediate result of the German decree was that American passenger ships were deterred from sailing for Europe. This brought the situation home very vividly to the dwellers on the Eastern states, but had only a remote interest for the inhabitants of the West and the middle West. At first there was no very flagrant offence against American shipping, though the *Housatonic* was sunk on 3rd February and the *Lyman M. Law* on 13th February. But the situation was none the less intolerable, and on the 26th Mr. Wilson again addressed Congress, pointing out that Germany had placed a practical embargo on America's shipping,

and asking for authority to arm her vessels effectually for defence. What he contemplated was an armed neutrality which should stop short of war. On 1st March the House of Representatives gave this authority by 403 votes to 13, but in the Senate a similar vote was held up by a handful of pacificists, and could not be passed before the session came automatically to an end on 4th March. Nevertheless an overwhelming majority of the Senate signed a manifesto in favour of the Bill. Meantime various events had roused the temper of the country. On 26th February the *Laconia* was sunk and eight Americans drowned. On 1st March there was published an order issued on 19th January by Herr Zimmermann, of the German Foreign Office, to the German Minister in Mexico. The latter was instructed to form an alliance with Mexico in the event of war breaking out between Germany and the United States, and to offer as a bribe the provinces of Texas, Arizona, and New Mexico. In the same document it was suggested that efforts might be made to seduce Japan from the Allies and bring her into partnership with Germany. Such proposals inspired the deepest resentment in the West and the middle West, where the submarine atrocities were least realized. There was another consideration which was beginning to impress thoughtful Americans. Even if she avoided war, America would be forced one day or another to negotiate a settlement with Germany. Peace would not come to her automatically on the conclusion of hostilities, and her position in peace negotiations would depend on how the war ended. Mr. Wilson realized that his present policy could not endure. In his inaugural address of 5th March, he said: "We have been obliged to arm ourselves to make good our claim to a certain minimum of right and of freedom of action. We stand firm in armed neutrality, since it seems that in no other way we can demonstrate what it is we insist upon and cannot forgo. We may be drawn on by circumstances, not by our own purpose or desire, to a more active assertion of our rights as we see them, and a more immediate association with the great struggle itself."

The order for arming merchant ships was issued by the American Government on the 12th of March. A week later came the "overt acts" of which the President had spoken. On the 16th the *Vigilancia* was sunk and five American lives lost. On the 17th the *City of Memphis* and the *Illinois* followed suit. On the 21st the *Healdton* was torpedoed off the Dutch coast and outside the prohibited zone, and seven Americans perished. On 1st April came the loss of the *Aztec*, when twenty-eight Americans were

lost. The defiance was flagrant and unmistakable. The feeling against Germany rose to fever heat. At last the country was ripe for the final step. In the words of the official statement: "Judging the German Government now in the light of our own experience through the long and patient years of our honest attempt to keep the peace, we could see the Great Autocracy and read her record through the war. And we found that record damnable. . . . With a fanatical faith in the destiny of German *kultur* as the system that must rule the world, the Imperial Government's actions have through years of boasting, double-dealing, and deceit, tended towards aggression upon the rights of others. . . . Its record . . . has given not only to the Allies but to liberal peoples throughout the world the conviction that this menace to human liberties everywhere must be utterly shorn of its power for harm. For the evil it has effected has ranged far out of Europe—out upon the open seas, where its submarines, in defiance of law and the concepts of humanity, have blown up neutral vessels and covered the waves with the dead and dying, men and women and children alike. Its agents have conspired against the peace of neutral nations everywhere, sowing the seeds of dissension, ceaselessly endeavouring by tortuous methods of deceit, of bribery, false promises, and intimidation, to stir up brother nations one against the other, in order that the liberal world might not be able to unite, in order that the Autocracy might emerge triumphant from the war. All this we know from our own experience with the Imperial Government. As they have dealt with Europe, so they have dealt with us and with all mankind."

The case against Germany was plain, and an event had occurred which made an alliance easier with Germany's foes. On 9th March the Revolution broke out in Petrograd; by 16th March the autocracy had fallen and a popular Government ruled in Russia. The issue was now clear, not as a strife between dynasties, but as the eternal war of liberty and despotism, and no free people could be deaf to the call. The special session of Congress was advanced by a fortnight, and on 2nd April Mr. Wilson asked it for a declaration of war.

The President's message on that day will rank among the greatest of America's many famous state documents. Couched in terms of studious moderation and dignity, it stated not only the case of America against Germany, but of civilization against barbarism and popular government against tyranny. He began with an indictment of the submarine campaign, recalling the promise given

on May 4, 1916, and its complete reversal by the decree of January 31, 1917. "Vessels of every kind, whatever their flag, their character, their cargo, their destination, their errand, have been ruthlessly sent to the bottom without warning and without thought of help or mercy for those on board, the vessels of friendly neutrals along with those of belligerents. Even hospital ships * and ships carrying relief to the sorely bereaved and stricken people of Belgium, though the latter were provided with safe-conduct through the proscribed areas by the German Government itself, and were distinguished by unmistakable marks of identity, have been sunk with the same reckless lack of compassion or of principle." Germany had swept away the last fragments of international rights, and her new warfare was not against commerce only but against mankind.

He admitted that when he spoke on 26th February he had hoped that an armed neutrality would be sufficient to protect his people. But Germany was resolved to treat the armed guards placed on merchantmen as mere pirates beyond the pale of law. "Armed neutrality is ineffectual enough at best; in such circumstances and in the face of such pretensions it is worse than ineffectual; it is likely only to produce what it is meant to prevent; it is perfectly certain to draw us into war without either the rights or the effectiveness of belligerents.† There is only one choice we cannot make, we are incapable of making: we will not choose the path of submission and suffer the most sacred rights of our nation to be ignored or violated. The wrongs against which we now array ourselves are no common wrongs; they cut to the very roots of human life. With a profound sense of the solemn and even tragical character of the step I am taking, and of the grave responsibilities which it involves, but in unhesitating obedience to what I deem my constitutional duty, I advise that the Congress declare the recent course of the Imperial German Government to be in fact nothing less than war against the Government and people of the United States."

He outlined the urgent practical requirements. War would involve the organization and mobilization of all the national

* Notably the *Britannic*, the *Gloucester Castle*, and the *Asturias* (sunk 20th March). The Belgian relief ships were the *Camilla*, the *Trevier*, the *Feistein*, and the *Storstad*.

† It had been tried before in American history. In 1798 President John Adams was empowered by Congress to arm American merchant vessels against French privateers. Several naval engagements took place, and it was clear that America was moving rapidly towards war. An army was being prepared, under Washington and Alexander Hamilton, and an alliance sought with England, when Napoleon came into power and offered terms which America could accept.

resources of the country; the immediate full equipment of the navy; the immediate addition of half a million men to the armed forces under the principle of universal service, and the authorization of further levies as soon as they could be handled. Above all it involved "the utmost practicable co-operation in counsel and action with the Governments now at war with Germany," and the extension to them of the most liberal financial credits. The problem was twofold—to prepare America for war, and at the same time to supply the Allied nations with the materials which they needed. "They are in the field, and we should help them in every way to be effective there."

The declaration was complete, explicit, and uncompromising; but the President did not end with that. His conclusion raised the argument to a higher sphere, for he gave expression to the eternal principles for which America entered the field. He restated his hope for the establishment of peace based upon the reign of law. "Neutrality is no longer feasible or desirable when the peace of the world is involved and the freedom of its peoples, and the menace to that peace and freedom lies in the existence of autocratic Governments backed by organized force, which is controlled wholly by their will, not by the will of their people. We have seen the last of neutrality in such circumstances. We are at the beginning of an age in which it will be insisted that the same standards of conduct and of responsibility for wrong done shall be observed among nations and their governments that are observed among the individual citizens of civilized states." He had dreamed of a League of Nations, but there could be no honest friendship with autocracies. "Self-governing nations do not fill their neighbour states with spies. . . . Such designs can be successfully worked out only under cover and where no one has the right to ask questions. . . . A steadfast concert for peace can never be maintained except by a partnership of democratic nations. No autocratic Government could be trusted to keep faith with it or observe its covenants. It must be a league of honour, a partnership of opinion. Intrigues would cut its vitals away; the plottings of inner circles who could plan what they would, and render account to no one, would be a corruption seated at its very heart. Only free people can hold their purpose and their honour steady to a common end, and prefer the interests of mankind to any narrow interest of their own."

"The world must be made safe for democracy." This phrase was the keystone of the speech, and it will stand among the dozen

most celebrated sayings of modern history. Almost in the strain of Lincoln's Second Inaugural, the message concluded :—

"It is a fearful thing to lead this great and peaceful people into war, into the most terrible and disastrous of all wars, civilization itself seeming to be in the balance. But the right is more precious than peace, and we shall fight for the things we have always carried nearest our hearts—for democracy, for the right of those who submit to authority to have a voice in their own Governments, for the rights and liberties of small nations, for a universal dominion of right by such a concert of free people as shall bring peace and safety to all nations and make the world itself at last free.

"To such a task we can dedicate our lives and our fortunes, everything that we are and everything that we have, with the pride of those who know that the day has come when America is privileged to spend her blood and her might for the principles that gave her birth and happiness and the peace which she has treasured.

"God helping her, she can do no other."

Under the American Constitution the right to declare war lay with Congress. The President's message was received with stormy enthusiasm by the audience which listened to it, and a thrill of assent ran through the length and breadth of the land. The debate in the two Houses revealed a preponderant weight of opinion for war. Senator Stone, the Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, went into frank opposition, and various senators attacked the resolution on such grounds as that the war was a struggle of financiers which did not concern the people at large, or that the Republic was being made a catspaw by the reactionary British monarchy. Echoes of anti-British feeling, the dregs of the romantic views of history once taught in American schools, were heard throughout the discussion. But the great issues were eloquently stated by men like Senator Lodge, and Senator John Sharp Williams of Mississippi delivered a passionate protest against the old hack criticism of Britain. On 4th April the Senate passed the war resolution by 82 votes to 6. Next day it was introduced in the House of Representatives by Mr. Flood of Virginia, and the debate which followed showed that a good deal of confusion still existed among the members. Some defended it on the broadest lines of world policy and international right, others took the narrower ground of American interests. Its critics lamented the end of the Monroe doctrine, or expressed simply the humanitarian repugnance to bloodshed, or attacked Britain's naval policy, or revelled in the old spread-

eagle republicanism. The comedian-patriot was not wanting. Said one gentleman from Nevada: "All crowned heads look alike to me, and I do not want to sleep with any of them, whether it be the Kaiser, the Mikado, John Bull, or the Sultan of Turkey. This fight is not of our making, and we had better keep out of it. I do not think Uncle Sam looks good mixed up with any of them. I want to tell you that every man, woman, and child in the country would applaud if we would take both John Bull and the Kaiser and bump their royal noddles together, open up all seas, and treat them both alike."

The arguments of the opposition were for the most part trivial, and were easily met by the supporters of the resolution; but they proved that a considerable section of the nation, its mental joints stiffened from two and a half years of neutrality, found some difficulty in adjusting itself to the new conditions. They were not quite certain about their new allies, but on the whole they were certain about their enemies. The speech of Mr. Foss of Illinois expressed with vigour the predominant attitude towards Germany. "As a reward for our neutrality what have we received at the hands of William II.? He has set the torch of the incendiary to our factories, our workshops, our ships, and our wharves. He has laid the bomb of the assassin in our munition plants and the holds of our ships. He has sought to corrupt our manhood with a selfish dream of peace when there is no peace. He has wilfully butchered our citizens on the high seas. He has destroyed our commerce. He seeks to terrorize us with his devilish policy of frightfulness. He has violated every canon of international decency, and set at naught every solemn treaty and every precept of international law. He has plunged the world into the maddest orgy of blood, rapine, and murder which history records. He has intrigued against our peace at home and abroad. He seeks to destroy our civilization. Patience is no longer a virtue, further endurance is cowardice, submission to Prussian demands is slavery."

On 6th April, by a majority of 373 votes to 50, the House of Representatives passed the resolution, which ran as follows: "Whereas the Imperial German Government have committed repeated acts of war against the Government and the people of the United States of America: Therefore be it resolved by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled: That a state of war between the United States and the Imperial German Government which has been thrust upon the United States is hereby formally declared;

and that the President be, and he is hereby authorized and directed to employ the entire naval and military forces of the United States and the resources of the Government to carry on war against the Imperial German Government; and to bring the conflict to a successful termination all the resources of the country are hereby pledged by the Congress of the United States."

The entrance of America into the war on the Allied side meant an immediate increase of strength in certain vital matters. She was the greatest workshop on earth, and the high mechanical talent of her people was invaluable in what was largely a war of engineers. She had immense wealth to put into the common stock. She had a powerful fleet, though one somewhat lacking in the lighter type of vessel which was the chief need of the moment, and she had a great capacity for shipbuilding. Her army was small, but its officers were among the most highly trained in the world, and her reserves of man-power gave her the chance of almost unlimited expansion. It would be some time before she could make her potential strength actual, but in the meantime she solved the worst financial difficulties of the Allies, and her accession made ultimate victory something more than probable. Like her cousins of Britain, she was a nation slow to move, but on the path she had chosen she would walk resolutely to the end of the journey.

Her coming seemed to make victory all but certain, and the right kind of victory. For she entered upon war not for any parochial ends, but for the reorganization of the world's life on a sane basis. Her organic internationalism—the more comprehensive since it was a reaction against a traditional policy of isolation—was in starker antagonism to Prussianism than any of the ordinary schemes of territorial readjustment in Europe. Her motives were a mingling of the best conclusions which American thought had reached during the past three years, the dream of a pacific alliance of all peoples, the recognition that peace could only be won on the basis of a common freedom, and the desire to reconstitute public right on a surer foundation than partial treaties. She restated the ideals which had been at the back of the minds of all the Allies from the start, but had been somewhat overlaid by the urgent problems of the hour, and she prepared to give these ideals the support of the whole of her mighty practical strength.

Mr. Wilson had justified his policy of waiting. The debates on the declaration of war showed that the public mind of America was still in some doubt and confusion, and if this were so even at

that late hour, it is probable that the President could not have secured the national assent he needed at any earlier date. A different type of leader might by the sheer force of personality have swung his country into the war in 1915, trusting to facts to compel unanimity: Mr. Wilson, obeying another code, demanded an all but universal agreement before he acted. Fortunately the very districts most averse to war were those where his personal prestige was greatest. He had played his part with remarkable skill. He had suffered Germany herself to prepare the American people for intervention, and Germany had laboured manfully to that end. He had allowed the spectacle of American powerlessness in the titanic struggle to be always before the popular mind till the people grew uneasy and asked for guidance. He had shown infinite patience and courtesy, so that no accusation of petulance or haste could be brought against him. But when the case was proved and the challenge became gross he struck promptly and struck hard. If in the eyes of his critics he had not always stated the issue truly and had shown an easiness of temper which came perilously near complaisance, it was now clear that he had had a purpose in it all. As soon as he felt himself strong enough for action he had not delayed. He had brought the whole nation into line on a matter which meant the reversal of every traditional mode of thought; and when we reflect on the centrifugal tendencies of American life, and its stout conservatism, we must confess that such a feat demanded a high order of genius in statecraft.

CHAPTER LXXV.

GERMANY SHORTENS HER WESTERN LINE.

November 16, 1916–*April* 5, 1917.

The new Hindenburg Positions—Nivelle departs from Joffre's Policy—Haig's Difficulties—The final Arrangements—The British capture Serre—Beginning of German Retreat—The New Line and its Pivots.

(*Maps*, pp. 214, 444.)

DURING the last weeks of the Battle of the Somme British airmen, scouting far east of Bapaume and Péronne, reported a great activity in front of Cambrai and St. Quentin. Thousands of Russian prisoners were at work digging trenches on a plan which seemed to imply the creation of a fresh fortified line. Shortly after, rumours began to spread in Germany of a new bulwark of the Fatherland created by the genius of Hindenburg. The successive defeats on the Somme, and the rapid loss of positions which had been pronounced impregnable, had induced in the German people a profound nervousness about the situation in the West. At any moment it seemed that the defences might crumble, and the German frontiers lie open to the Allied armies. The magic of Hindenburg's name was invoked to reassure his people. He had had no part in the original defences of the West, and took no discredit by their failure. But if a position were created under his auspices, that position would stand, for in German eyes failure and Hindenburg had never met. The new line was called after the heroes of Teutonic mythology—Woden, Siegfried, Alberich, Brunehilde, Kriemhilde—and the legend of it was whispered through Germany during the winter. The Allies, who followed with interest the stages in its construction, called it the Hindenburg Line, being well aware that its main value for Germany lay in its association with Germany's most popular commander.

The situation in the West demanded a plan, for the Somme had shaken the German *moral* to its foundations. It was clear that a mere defensive battle was not enough; for to be driven

from crest to crest by the Allied infantry, and pounded day and night by the Allied guns, would lead presently to a general disaster. Hindenburg resolved to prepare for an offensive in the spring, and for this purpose accumulated a strategic reserve which presently mounted to upwards of fifty divisions. He was aware that the Allies would advance as soon as the soil dried after the winter, and he proposed to yield ground which was no longer tenable, and fall back upon a position of his own choosing, where he might compel them to fight at a disadvantage. His argument was not without reason. The Allies in advancing would be moving over a country devastated by war, and every yard of their progress would be slow and difficult. The German retreat would be by good roads and railways in a terrain with which they were minutely familiar, and to a halting-place which had been laboriously prepared. The odds were that in such a situation an opportunity would be found to strike a counter-blow with the chances in Germany's favour. A frontal offensive like the Battle of the Somme was not possible for Hindenburg, with his inferiority in guns and —even after all his recruiting efforts—in numbers of men.* His one hope was some ruse where advantage could be taken of a long-prepared position and the difficulties of an enemy advancing across an old battlefield. But if he were to succeed, the retreat must be meticulously planned and methodically executed. No area must be ceded to force instead of strategy; for, if the withdrawal at any point were hustled, the whole programme would fall to pieces, and a counter-stroke would become impossible.†

When, in the third week of November 1916, the larger operations on the Ancre came to an end, the condition of the German line was not enviable. From the Butte de Warlencourt to the river Somme they had fairly good positions, though in most parts at the mercy of our observation from the higher ground. But to the north the salient which had its apex on the spur above Beaumont Hamel was exposed to constant danger from the British movement in the Ancre valley, where every fresh advance led to a more awkward enfilading, and laid bare to our view the rear of the defences at Serre and Gommecourt. To increase this awkwardness was obviously the British winter task. It could be done with small expenditure of men in the short spells of fine weather.

* The Allies at the moment had a superiority in the West of between thirty and forty divisions.

† The arrangements for the retreat were notified to the commanders as early as November 22, 1916.—O. von Moser, *Feldzugsaufzeichnungen, 1914–18.*

But in the meantime preparation must be made for the great spring offensive. On 16th November Haig and Joffre had met at Chantilly, and concerted a plan for 1917. The main principles were that the pressure in the West was to be kept up throughout the winter, and that the Allied armies were to be prepared for an offensive by the middle of February. On 27th November Joffre issued more explicit instructions. By 1st February the British armies were to be ready to attack between Bapaume and the Vimy ridge, and the French northern group, under Franchet d'Esperey, between the Oise and the Somme. Within a fortnight the French central group was to attack on the Aisne. When the enemy had been weakened by this arpeggio of assault, it was Haig's intention to turn to Flanders, and there finish the operations of the summer —and, it might be, of the war.

For these projects extensive preparations must be made. The troops which had been so sorely tried in the past five months must be rested and brought up to strength; new divisions must be trained, and the vast educational system continued under which the whole British hinterland had become a staff college. Above all, the communications must be perfected for the coming advance. We have seen how in October the incessant rain had played havoc with the roads in the Somme area. A hard winter would complete their ruin unless the whole system of routes were re-formed. Light railways must be constructed on a colossal scale, to ease the strain on the main highways and set the weather at defiance. "The task of obtaining the amount of railway material to meet the demands of our armies," wrote Sir Douglas Haig in his dispatch, "and of carrying out the work of construction at the rate rendered necessary by our plans, in addition to providing labour and materials for the necessary repair of roads, was one of the very greatest difficulty." It was, indeed, the key of the whole situation. The railway companies in Britain and Canada loyally co-operated, giving up locomotives and rolling stock, and even tearing up tracks to provide the necessary rails.

The Somme, as we now know from the enemy's confession, had struck a blow at his strength far deadlier than at the time the world recognized. To the civilian Governments of France and Britain the long battle had seemed but a moderate success, won at a prodigious cost of life, and only to one or two of the fighting commanders was the truth revealed. It is probable that, had the pressure been kept high and the Chantilly plan put into effect in early February, before the enemy could perfect his arrangements

for retreat, and long before he could draw any advantage from the chaos soon to reign in Russia, the summer of 1917 would have seen the victory of the Allies. But the fates willed otherwise, and their main instruments were the French politicians. For long it had been becoming clear to Joffre that France could not permanently sustain the chief offensive; that the depletion of her man-power made it desirable that she should gradually entrust the main attack to the rapidly growing British armies. In such a renunciation there could be no loss of honour; she had drawn all the spears to her breast in the first years of war, and might reasonably leave it to others to complete that which she had so nobly instituted. Joffre saw, too, the practical difficulty of calling upon the British armies at one and the same time to act on the defensive and the offensive—to increase the length of their front and also to carry out ambitious attacks. His views were not shared, however, by certain powerful groups in politics. These feared that France, who had already suffered so much, would miss the glory of the final blow. They held that her strength was still sufficient to deal that blow, but that some method must be found less banal, slow, and costly than the tactics of the Somme. Joffre was an old man, set firm in a groove; let some new leader be chosen, with youth and genius on his side, to break through the miasmic tradition of limited objectives, advances measured by inches, and battles spun out to half a year. This view prevailed; on 16th December Joffre was shelved by promotion, and Nivelle became Commander-in-Chief.

Nivelle's policy, his difficulties, and the grave crisis which ensued in the French army belong to a later chapter. Here we are concerned only with the effect of his appointment on the British command. The Chantilly plan was at once dropped. On 21st December the new French Generalissimo informed Haig that there would be two preparatory attacks, as arranged at Chantilly, but on much shorter fronts, and that the main operation would be an attempt to break through on the Aisne by twenty-seven French divisions. To obtain these divisions he requested Haig to extend the British line south of the Somme as far as the Amiens–Roye road. This completely altered the British plan. The extension of his front prevented Haig from exercising upon the enemy the close pressure he had intended, and the postponement of the attack by a matter of at least six weeks seemed to give that enemy a chance to recover and so undo the effect of the Somme battle. It was true that there would be ample compensation if Nivelle's

great enterprise succeeded, and in twenty-four hours, as he promised, he had captured the enemy's heavy guns.

Meantime Mr. Lloyd George had become Prime Minister of Britain, and he had as little love for the Somme tactics as had the critics of Joffre. Moreover, his mental vitality made him adventure gaily on the most expert domains, and he was prepared to theorize about the conduct of war and to enforce his theories. On January 5, 1917, he attended a conference at Rome, and delighted Cadorna by a proposal to give him the British and French reserves, and finish the war by pushing through the Julian Alps to Laibach and Vienna. But apart from the Italian General Staff he could get no soldier to support this scheme, and Nivelle was openly scornful. On his way home Mr. Lloyd George heard of Nivelle's plan—limitless objectives, the end of trench fighting, victory within two days—and naturally fell in love with it. On 15th January the French Commander-in-Chief explained his conception to the British War Cabinet, and though Haig and Robertson were sceptical of its success, as were Pétain and nearly all the French generals, the British Government, like the French, were prepared to take the risk. The latter proposed that Haig should be put under the orders of Nivelle. Mr. Lloyd George agreed, and on 26th February a conference was held at Calais to negotiate the details. The first French suggestion was for an "amalgam" of the two commands—a French generalissimo, a British chief of staff, and a mixed headquarters staff, with French control not only of strategy, but of the distribution and supply of the British troops. The ultimate decision was that during the period of the coming operations Haig should conform to Nivelle's general strategy, but should be free to choose his own method; any serious difference between the two was to be reported to the War Cabinet.

Such an arrangement had little to recommend it. It was not a unified command; it was the placing of one army in subordination to another, and yet not in complete subordination, for Haig could not rid himself of his responsibility to his own Government, and the British War Cabinet reserved the right to interfere. Difficulties were not slow in revealing themselves. On 27th February Nivelle instructed Haig to attack towards Cambrai, which meant that the British commander would entangle himself in a pocket of the new Siegfried system, instead of destroying its pivot at Vimy. Nivelle refused to believe in a German retreat, though it had already begun with the loss of the Miraumont heights; as late

as 4th March we find him informing Franchet d'Esperey, who sent him a memorandum on the subject, that the Germans would never voluntarily abandon a front which was a direct menace to Paris. Haig rightly protested against his instructions, and after an anxious controversy, carried his point at the London conference of 13th March. It was arranged that his attack, when it came, should be in the Arras–Vimy section, and should have a general direction towards Douai rather than Cambrai.

Such is a summary of the confused preliminaries of the 1917 offensive. It is important to keep them in mind if we would appreciate the difficulties which faced Haig and Franchet d'Esperey, and the good fortune which saved the enemy from a position of infinite peril. The change of plan in December nullified the chief results of the Somme battle. The close contact with the enemy, necessary to pin him down to a bad line, was lost while Haig was occupied with taking over fresh miles of front and Franchet d'Esperey with labouring to compile Nivelle's reserve. The postponement of the main attack from February to April gave the Germans the margin for refitment and rest which made all the difference. The civilian Governments of both France and Britain chose to regard the Somme as a failure, and, ignorant of the mercies vouchsafed to them, declined to reap the fruits of an indisputable success. Nivelle offered a brilliant gamble; but in accepting it they rejected a sober and certain victory. The French *débâcle* of May, the horrors of Third Ypres, Caporetto, the final downfall of Russia, the 1918 retreat from the Somme, the Lys, and the Aisne, may be regarded as implicit in that fatal decision.

The attack of November 18, 1916, the last phase of the Battle of the Somme, had brought our line on the left bank of the Ancre close to the outskirts of Pys and Grandcourt. The German position in this area now ran from the spur above Beaumont Hamel along the ridge north of Beaucourt, and then crossed the Ancre and enclosed Grandcourt, Miraumont, and Pys. Behind lay a strong second system, a double line of trenches heavily wired, in front of Bucquoy and Achiet-le-Petit, Grévillers, and Loupart Wood to the Albert–Bapaume road, whence it continued south-east past Le Transloy to Saillisel. This position, which we called the Le Transloy–Loupart line, was, both from its natural and artificial defences, immensely strong, scarcely inferior to the Thiepval–Morval line which we had carried in the autumn. Behind it, on the far side of the crest, a third line was being con-

structed during November and December covering Rocquigny, Bapaume, and Ablainzevelle.

December was wet and misty, and with the opening of the new year came a period of bitter frost, varied by snowstorms, which tried sorely the endurance of the men in the front trenches. But in January, in spite of the weather, we began a steady advance. Our first business was to clear the Beaumont Hamel spur. At dawn on 11th January we carried the crest for nearly a mile east and north-east of Beaumont Hamel, taking over two hundred prisoners; and, after repeated small attacks, by the end of the month we had won all the spur, had pushed 1,000 yards north of Beaucourt, and had gained a footing on the southern slopes of the ridge north-west of Miraumont. Our casualties were light, for the ground had been magnificently prepared by our artillery, with the assistance of direct observation from the Thiepval ridge.

Our new position gave us command of the whole western side of the high ground from Serre to opposite Grandcourt. The next objective was the top of this ridge. On the night of 3rd February and the following day we bit into the German second line on a broad front, and carried our line north of the Ancre to a point level with the centre of Grandcourt village. This advance made Grandcourt untenable by the enemy, and on the morning of 6th February he evacuated the trenches between Grandcourt and Stuff Redoubt. Next morning we entered the village, and that night, pushing forward on the right bank of the stream, took Baillescourt Farm, within 1,000 yards of Miraumont.

Serre had now become an acute salient, and, since we held most of the hollow which runs north from Beaucourt, it was only a question of days till it yielded. On the night of 10th February, after a sharp struggle, we carried a line of trenches at the southern foot of Serre Hill. In the two succeeding days we beat off counter-attacks, and prepared for a more elaborate movement. At Courcelette a clearly marked spur ran westward from the Thiepval–Morval ridge. The northern end of this commanded the approaches to Pys and Miraumont from the south, and moreover gave observation over the nest of enemy batteries concealed in the upper Ancre glen, on whose support the defence of Serre depended. South of the Ancre this spur was our objective, while north of the stream we aimed at winning a sunken road on the ridge north-east of Baillescourt Farm, which would give us command of the western approaches to Miraumont.

A thaw set in on 16th February, and the night following was

black as pitch, with a thin mist rising from the sweating earth. The enemy expected some movement, and about 4.45 a.m. on the morning of the 17th he opened a heavy barrage, which caught our troops as they were forming for the attack. In spite of these drawbacks, our men advanced at 5.45 a.m. with perfect resolution. North of the stream they won all their objectives, and south of it, though they fell short of their full goal, they reached a line within a few hundred yards of Petit Miraumont, the suburb of Miraumont across the Ancre. Six hundred prisoners were the result of the day. Next day, the 18th, the enemy counter-attacked without success, and during the subsequent days we crept to the summit of the desired ridge. The whole hinterland of Serre and the whole of the upper Ancre glen were now exposed to our direct observation, and it was clear that the German position in that area could not be maintained. Miraumont was the key of Serre; Serre was the key of Puisieux-au-Mont and Gommecourt. When the corner stone is taken from the building the other supports must totter and fall.

Haig was not mistaken in his forecast. On 21st February our patrols reported that the trenches before Pys, Miraumont, and Serre seemed to be empty. That day and the next we pushed continuously forward, and discovered that the enemy had evacuated all his positions in front of the Le Transloy–Loupart line and north of the Albert–Bapaume road. By the evening of the 25th we held the hamlets of Warlencourt-Eaucourt, Pys, Miraumont, the famous dovecot at Beauregard, and the ruins of Serre. The last gain brought satisfaction to the many thousands who on 1st July, and again in November in the preceding year, had struggled in vain against its honeycombed ridges and its forest of wire. Our advance had few casualties and little opposition. The withdrawal had been skilfully managed, but it had all the chances on its side. In the words of the official dispatch, "The enemy's retirement at this juncture was greatly favoured by the weather. The prolonged period of exceptional frost, following on a wet autumn, had frozen the ground to a great depth. When the thaw commenced, in the third week of February, the roads, disintegrated by the frost, broke up, the sides of the trenches fell in, and the area through which our troops had fought their way forward returned to a condition of slough and quagmire even worse than that of the previous autumn. On the other hand, the condition of the roads and the surface of the ground behind the enemy steadily improved the farther he withdrew from the scene of the fighting."

The position now was that north of the Albert–Bapaume road we were face to face with the main Le Transloy–Loupart line, but that south of the road we had still to carry an intermediate position, running from a point in the Le Transloy line west of the village of Beaulencourt, in front of Ligny-Thilloy and Le Barque, to the south end of Loupart Wood. During the last week of February we gradually ate our way into this position, and by the evening of 2nd March had won Le Barque, Ligny-Thilloy, and Thilloy, and were within 2,000 yards of Bapaume itself. North of the Ancre by that date we had entered Puisieux-au-Mont, and held Gommecourt village, with its park and château. Only Irles remained, now the point of a sharp salient linked up to Loupart Wood and Achiet-le-Petit by strong trench lines. It took us a week to make routes through the wilderness, and during our road-making we had to keep in constant touch with the enemy by raids and small outpost attacks. On 10th March we were ready, and at 5.25 that morning we captured Irles, taking numerous machine guns and trench mortars, and considerably more prisoners than our total number of casualties.

By now there were signs that the time had ripened for the greater withdrawal which Hindenburg had long contemplated. Haig had met Nivelle's request to take over a larger part of the front, and by 26th February had extended as far south as Roye, so that the British line in the West was now 110 miles long. This gave us a long and most intricate front to watch, and the two armies in the centre area—the Fifth, under Sir Herbert Gough, north of the Albert–Bapaume road; and the Fourth, under Sir Henry Rawlinson, to the south of it—had a task which tried to the utmost their capacities. The Germans were in an awkward salient between Arras and Le Transloy, and they were in a position scarcely less difficult in the greater salient between Arras and the Aisne. To cut off the former meant a withdrawal to the line on the eastern side of the Bapaume ridge running from Rocquigny, 300 yards east of Le Transloy, through Bapaume to Ablainzevelle, 3,000 yards north-east of Bucquoy. It meant the surrender of the Le Transloy–Loupart line, and the retirement to the last of the prepared positions of which we were cognisant in the Somme area. To cut off the larger salient involved a far greater retirement—a retirement to the Siegfried Line itself, which branched off from the old position near Arras, ran south-eastward for twelve miles to Quéant, and then passed west of Cambrai and St. Quentin and La Fère to the heights of the Aisne. By the beginning of the

second week of March the Allies were conscious of a general movement in the enemy lines everywhere between the Aisne and Arras. For the Germans to carry out their programme it was necessary first to extricate themselves from the local Bapaume salient. There they held one of the strongest positions on the whole Western front, and it was intended to yield it by slow degrees while preparations for withdrawal were completed in other areas.

But the British advance was speedier than the enemy foresaw. Especially, in spite of the tortured ground, the guns had been brought forward with surprising celerity, and roads prepared for the ammunition supply. On 11th March our artillery opened against the Le Transloy–Loupart line, and in two days the enemy had been shelled out of it, and driven back upon his last position. This was not according to his programme. Grévillers and Loupart Wood were now ours, and we lost no time in pressing the bombardment of the final line. The event dislocated the German plan, and hustled a retreat which had been meant to be more orderly and leisured. On 14th March our patrols found the German first line empty at St. Pierre Vaast Wood. Cautiously pushing forward, we held the whole of that wood and the western half of Moislains Wood by the evening of 16th March. Meantime we had discovered that the enemy front south of the Somme was becoming fluid. It had grown very thin, and seemed to be held mainly by rearguards with machine guns. The time had come for a general pressure along the whole front. Hitherto the fighting had been almost exclusively in the British area. The advance was now to spread from the Scheldt to the Aisne.

On the morning of 17th March the Allied commanders, French and British, ordered a general forward movement on a front of forty-five miles. The movement was, indeed, greater, for it embraced virtually the whole line from Arras to north of Soissons—seventy miles as the crow flies, well over one hundred if the sinuosities of the front trenches were followed. There was no serious resistance. Rearguards had been left in places like Chaulnes, Government Farm between the woods of St. Pierre Vaast and Vaux, Bapaume, and Achiet-le-Grand; but they were no more than rearguards, and were easily pushed back, leaving a track of flaming villages. That night the Australians of the British Fifth Army were in Bapaume, and advanced troops of the Fourth Army were in Chaulnes. The French Sixth Army entered Roye, where they found some hundred civilians whom the enemy had had no time to remove, and south-east of the town reached the Roye–Lassigny

road. Next day, the 18th, British and French cavalry met in the streets of Nesle. Rawlinson entered Péronne at seven that morning, and south of the town forced his way up to the bank of the Somme. By ten in the evening our engineers had partly repaired the bridge at Brie, and our vanguards were over the river.

The next few days revealed to our soldiers some of the most surprising sights of the campaign. With the crossing of the Beugny–Ytres line on 18th March they were beyond the old tortured battlefield, with its infinite ramification of trenches. Henceforward, up to the new Siegfried Line, there was open country. The fields were not pitted with shell-holes; the trees were not splintered into matchwood; the villages had not been levelled by the Allied artillery. But the enemy himself in falling back had made a great destruction. Some of his doings were no doubt justifiable on military grounds. He was within his rights in destroying roads, in mining certain areas, in levelling buildings which might give billets to the Allies, in cutting down woods which could afford cover. Such is the ugly business of war; such it has been from the beginning of time. But war among civilized folk has always had its decencies, and no rag of them remained to cover the nakedness of German barbarism. Around the villages were often little orchards of immature fruit-trees which could not have offered shelter to a rat. Every one of these had been methodically killed.* Every house in town and hamlet had been looted of all goods that could be removed, and what could not be taken away had been smashed up or defiled. Churches had been ruthlessly violated. Graves had been broken open and plundered. Wells had been fouled. Sacred symbols had been defaced.

And in these deeds Germany gloried. Shameless details were published in her press as examples of how masterly and orderly had been the retreat, and how thorough-going were German methods. On a wall in one ruined town some apologist had written, "Do not rage at these things; only wonder." The oncoming Allies wondered, and they did not rage; their loathing was too deep a thing for the honest passion of anger. When the French cavalry cantered into some village and saw the thin faces of their fellow-citizens, lit now with a new hope but bearing terrible

* "When thou shalt besiege a city a long time, in making war against it to take it, thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof by wielding an axe against them; for thou mayest eat of them, and thou shalt not cut them down; for is the tree of the field man, that it should be besieged of thee? Only the trees which thou knowest that they be not trees for meat, thou shalt destroy and cut them down" (Deut. xx. 19, 20).

marks of ravage and suffering, they said nothing. No more did the British soldier, when he found a peasant groping blindly among the wanton ruins of his cottage for some of his pitiful little treasures, now in some German haversack. The thing was beyond words. They recognized by his mark the evil thing which they were pledged to destroy; and the knowledge, long possessed but now a thousandfold increased, was shown only in their eagerness to get to grips again. Their wrath found vent in superhuman labour to restore the roads so that the guns could come forward, for the guns were the only argument to deal with savagery. Like the sack of Belgium, the German retreat in the West emphasized that in the Allied purpose which was penal and retributive. On the last day of March M. Viviani in the French Senate spoke the mind of his countrymen. "These acts of murder and rapine and pillage are not merely an outrage on international law and honour. They constitute crimes dealt with in the penal code of all civilized countries. In order to prepare the verdict of history these crimes must be placed on record adequately and accurately. We shall fight until victory be gained, for it is on it alone that chastisement depends." *

During those days the Allies had literally to grope their way forward. They were advancing, over country in which all means of communication had been destroyed, against an enemy whose armies were still intact. Strong detachments of his infantry and cavalry occupied points of advantage along the line of advance; his guns, which had been withdrawn to prepared positions, were available at any moment to cover and support a sudden counter-stroke, while the broken country made the progress of the Allied artillery slow. He had a most formidable defensive system, upon which he could fall back should his counter-stroke miss its aim; while the Allies, as they moved forward, left prepared defences farther and farther behind them. The position craved wary walking, and those were anxious days for the Allied High Commands. Their cavalry felt their way gingerly through a country full of unknown perils. The infantry behind them prepared, as they advanced, successive lines of resistance in the event of a counter-attack. Behind them, again, the engineers and labour battalions did wonderful work in restoring roads and bridges and pushing

* Mangin's verdict is worth quoting: "Consacrer une grande quantité d'explosifs à faire sauter des ruines imposantes, et une main-d'œuvre considérable à raser tous les arbres fruitiers, c'est le fait d'une sauvagerie perfectionnée."—*Comment finit la Guerre*, p. 117.

on light railways, so that presently the difficulties of the old battle-field were conquered. The retreat of the Germans was, all things considered, a brilliant performance; but scarcely less brilliant was the work of the Allies, which nipped in the bud the counter-stroke that had been one object of that retreat.

To continue the chronicle of events. On the evening of 19th March the British held the line of the Somme from Canizy to Péronne, with outposts across the river, while northward their front ran from Beaurains, just south of Arras, by St. Leger and Velu to Barastre. The French were moving towards Ham, and had entered Noyon, in the Oise valley. Between the Oise and the Aisne they had occupied the old German front line, and had taken Crouy, on the plateau north of Soissons. On the 20th the British were fairly across the Somme by the new bridge at Brie, which had to be carried across both the river and the canal,* while the French were in Guiscard and east of Ham. The British advance was now reaching its limits in the north, for we were within a mile or two of the Siegfried Line, which entered the old German front-line system of Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines. On the 21st we took Beaumetz, and had to rebut five attempts to recover it, for the enemy's resistance was hardening as he drew near his prepared position. The French on that day had pushed as far as Roupy, only five miles from St. Quentin; had reached Tergnier, and crossed the St. Quentin Canal; and, south of Chauny, were on the line of the Ailette. But though each day saw some gain, the progress was slower, and the enemy had to be forced out of each outpost. Those days saw some brilliant cavalry work. On 27th March a single British squadron drove the enemy from Villers-Faucon and its neighbouring villages, taking twenty-three prisoners and four machine guns. So at Equancourt and Longarvesnes, where the Germans did not await the charge of a handful of our horsemen.

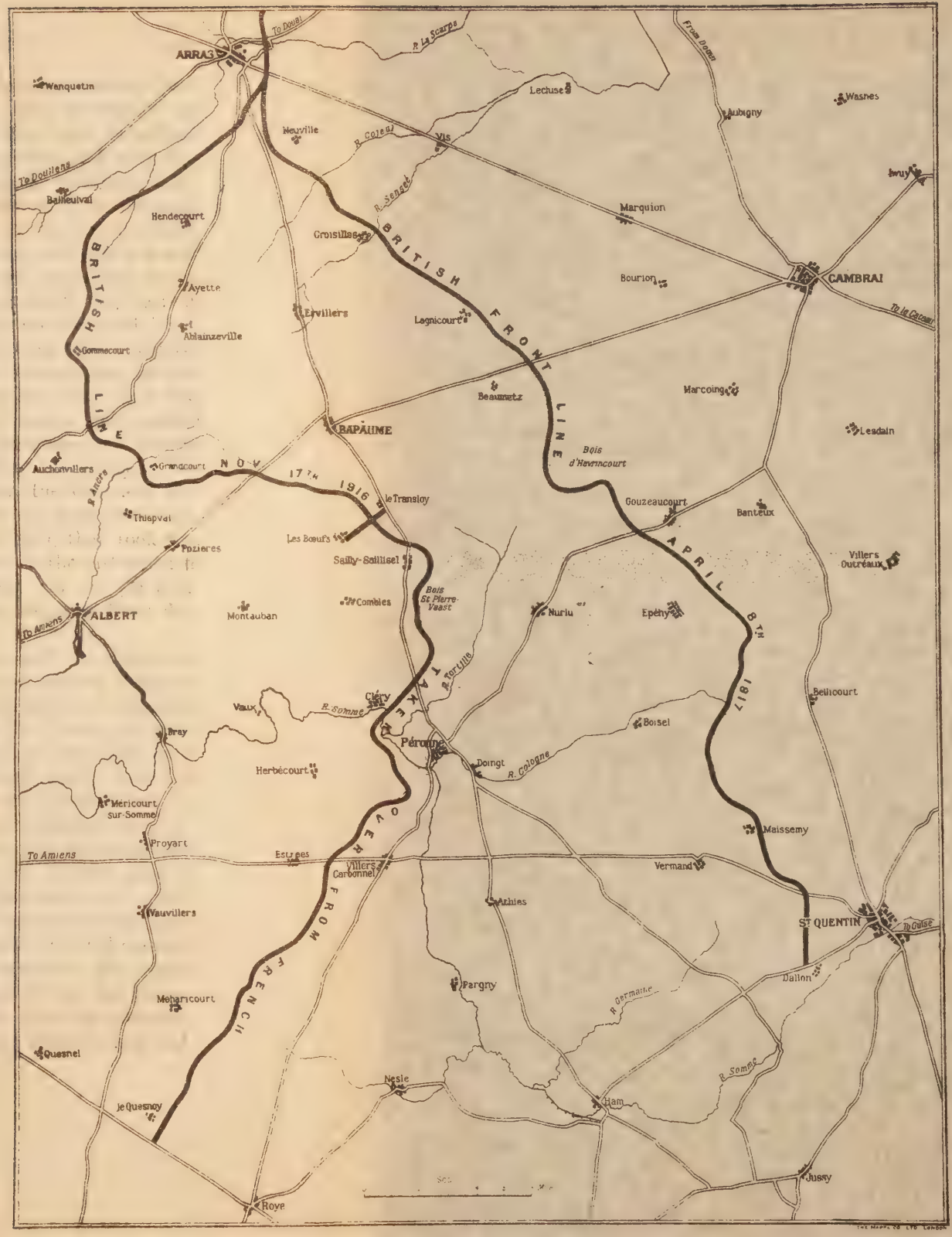
At the beginning of April the British were close up against the Siegfried Line from Beaurains to Doignies, and lay south by Epéhy and Jeancourt to near Selency, a few miles north-west of

* The magnitude of this performance may be judged from the official account :—

"Six gaps had to be bridged across the canal and river, some of them of considerable width and over a swift-flowing stream. The work was commenced on the morning of the 18th March, and was carried out night and day in three stages. By 10 p.m. on the same day footbridges for infantry had been completed. Medium type bridges for horse transport and cavalry were completed by 5 a.m. on the 20th March, and by 2 p.m. on the 21st March, or three and a half days after they had been begun, heavy bridges capable of taking all forms of traffic had taken the place of the lighter type. Medium type variation bridges were constructed as the heavy bridges were begun, so that, from the time the first bridges were thrown across the river, traffic was practically continuous."

THE NEW FRONT IN THE WEST.

(*Facing p. 444.*)



St. Quentin, at which point they again touched the German prepared position. The French were within a mile or two of La Fère. On 1st April the British, after a sharp fight, took the village of Savy, which gave them a prospect of St. Quentin, and next day drove the Germans from Savy Wood. During the following days, in spite of frequent counter-attacks, they pushed north of the wood between the St. Quentin–Cambrai railway and the Crozat Canal, which links the Scheldt and the Somme. They took half a dozen villages on the western skirts of St. Quentin, and established themselves within two miles of the town. Farther north they carried the line of fortified villages, the outposts of the Siegfried Line, stretching from Doignies to Croisilles. There now only remained the advanced position between Doignies and Selency, and on the 4th and 5th of April, in bitter, snowy weather, they took the villages of Roussoy, Lempere, and Metz-en-Couture, and pushed into the outskirts of Havrincourt Wood. Meantime the French were moving towards the Oise north of La Fère, advancing on the outworks of the St. Gobain plateau, between the Oise and the Ailette, and south of the latter stream moving along the ridge north of the Aisne. On the 3rd, in the first area, they took the villages of Dallon, Giffécourt, and Cérizy, and in the last reached the edge of Laffaux and occupied Vauxaillon. On the 4th they entered Moy, on the west bank of the Oise where it flows due south to La Fère.

The position now was that between Arras and the Aisne the Allies were almost everywhere in front of the German Siegfried Line. By the capture of Moy, St. Quentin was slightly outflanked towards the south. The vital point was the St. Gobain plateau, the occupation of which would make La Fère untenable, and would be the first step towards the capture of Laon. But the enemy was well aware of the importance of this plateau, and its many ravines and dense woods made it a hard position to carry. Already the French had won Coucy, with its noble old castle now blown up by the Germans, and had reached the western edge of the tableland. But there the enemy's front hardened, as it hardened south of the Ailette, on the limestone scarp between that river and the Aisne. His plan was now apparent. He had reached his famous line, and believed it to be impregnable. He would fight desperately for all parts of it, but especially for the pivots on which its security depended. These pivots were the positions about Arras in the north, and those in the south around Laon and the Chemin des Dames.

The German retirement was an event of supreme military interest, skilfully conducted and on the whole successful. The enemy did not yield much ground, for though some hundreds of ruined villages were restored to France, the depth gained was at the greatest only some twenty miles. He had few casualties, and lost few guns. But it is well to remember that he did not succeed in his full purpose. He sought to retire at his own time; but he had to submit to the Allied will, for the fighting on the Ancre in February and early March drove him from the Bapaume ridge, whether he willed it or not. He was more hustled in his retirement than he intended, and he wholly failed to draw the Allies into the snare which he had devised for them. He had never the chance of the crushing counter-stroke for which he had hoped. Moreover, as he told his people, he aimed at restoring the old war of movement; but in a fortnight he was as tightly pinned to his entrenchments as he had been on the hills of the Somme. The Siegfried Line was destined to remain for long not a fortress from which he could sally, but a prison. The honours of the retreat, therefore, were evenly divided.

To follow in the wake of the advancing armies was a strange experience for one who through the preceding eight months had watched the patient grinding movement of the Somme battle. The roads were speedily repaired, and the Albert–Bapaume highway, once a honeycomb of shell-pits, soon attained the perfection of a *route nationale* in peace. It was strange and eerie to move swiftly through country where a month before a man could scarcely crawl, and to pass the ghostly tumulus of the Butte de Warlencourt, round which so much good blood had been shed. Beyond Bapaume the observer saw, almost with a shock, fields yet cultivated and trees unbroken. In the shallow pocket where St. Quentin lay the guns still grumbled; but by the end of the first week of April the new Siegfried Line seemed quiet, save for an occasional burst of counter-battery work and the bickering of outposts. But in the south around St. Gobain Forest and on the Aisne plateau there was a steady bombardment, and, as the traveller went north and came to the point near Arras where the new enemy positions branched off from the old, the ear was deafened with the heavy rumour of war.

The Allies were preparing their spring offensive. The Siegfried Line had been reconnoitred, and the next blow would be struck at its pivots.

CHAPTER LXXVI.

THE BATTLE OF ARRAS.

April 4–June 6, 1917.

The Arras Neighbourhood—Haig's Problem and Dispositions—The Attack of Easter Monday—Difficulties of Weather—Fighting on the Scarpe and at Bullecourt —Summary of Battle.

(*Map*, p. 462.)

At the end of the first week of April the German armies were back in their sanctuary, and everywhere from Arras to the Aisne the attack of the pursuing enemy had been checked. The French were involved in the difficult country of the St. Gobain plateau; Sir Henry Rawlinson's Fourth Army had halted at the outskirts of St. Quentin; Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army, having forced the outlying positions early in April, stood in front of the main defences in the upper valleys of the Cojeul and the Sensée. In the Arras region lay Sir Edmund Allenby's Third Army, and beyond it Sir Henry Horne's First Army before Lens and La Bassée, and thence to the sea Sir Herbert Plumer's Second Army—all three in the positions which they had held for more than a year. The group under the Crown Prince of Bavaria had been extended to include the IV., I., and II. Armies, and with some sixty divisions held the front from the Channel to the Oise.* To meet the Allied artillery the enemy had increased the range of his field guns by some two thousand yards; he had in use a large number of long-range naval guns, and in his 5.9-inch howitzer he had a heavy weapon of exceptional value. His air work had vastly improved, especially as regards fast single-seater fighting machines like the Albatross and the Halberstadt. He comforted himself with the reflection that his Siegfried Line gave him a position stronger than that which he had lost on the Somme; that the Allies,

* Duke Albrecht of Würtemberg had been moved from Flanders to the group of detachments in Lorraine and the Vosges. The third group, that of the Imperial Crown Prince, lay from the Oise to east of Verdun, and embraced the VII., III., and V. Armies.

wearied with the hectic business of pursuit, were not in a position to launch any great attack yet awhile; and that ere they were ready his defences would have become impregnable.

The eyes of the Allied generals were fixed on the pivots, and Britain's concern was that northern one where, at the hamlet of Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines, the Siegfried Line branched off from the old front. Between that point and Lens the original lines were very strong, consisting of three main systems, each constructed on the familiar pattern of four parallel lines of trenches, studded with redoubts, and linked up with numerous switches. A special and very powerful switch line ran for five and a half miles from the village of Feuchy northward across the Scarpe to beyond Thelus, and so constituted what was virtually a fourth line of defence. The whole defensive belt was from two to five miles deep; but the German Command were not content with it. They had designed an independent line running from Drocourt, south-east of Lens, to the Siegfried Line at Quéant, which should be an alternative in case of an assault on the Arras salient. But at the beginning of April this position, which was to become famous as the Drocourt–Quéant line,* was not yet completed. It was intended as a protection for Douai and Cambrai, the loss of which would have made the whole Siegfried system untenable. But it was designed only *pro majore cautela*, for there was every confidence in the mighty ramified defences between Lens and Tilloy, and in the resisting power of the northern Siegfried sector.

The plan devised at Chantilly in November 1916 had, as we have seen, to be wholly recast, in view of the different policy and the enlarged powers of the new French Commander-in-Chief, and the German retreat to the Hindenburg Line. The position now was that the Arras attack, which Haig had regarded as only a preparation for the main campaign in Flanders, became the principal task of the British army during the first half of 1917. This action, at the same time, was conceived as a movement subsidiary to the greater effort of the French in the south. It was admittedly an attack in a region where, except for an unexampled piece of fortune, good strategic results could scarcely be obtained. The success of the British depended on what the French could do on the Aisne. If the latter failed, then the former, too, must fail in the larger strategic sense, however valuable might be certain of their local gains. If, however, Nivelle succeeded, the pressure from Arras in the north would beyond doubt greatly contribute to the

* Known to the Germans as the Wotan Line.

enemy's discomfiture. The danger of the whole plan was that the issue might be indeterminate, and the fighting at Arras so long protracted, without any decisive success, that the chances of the more vital Flanders offensive later in the summer might be imperilled. This, as we shall see, was precisely what happened.

The Arras neighbourhood had seen some of the bloodiest fighting of the war. It had been occupied by the Germans on September 1, 1914, and on the 18th of the same month reoccupied by the French. There, in October 1914, Maud'huy had held the fort through a desperate month. There, in May and June 1915, d'Urbal and the French Tenth Army had battled in vain for the Vimy heights. There, in September of the same year, during the Battle of Loos, a portion of the heights was won ; but the true crest was never gained, and during the succeeding month the French were forced back to the boggy valley of the Souchez. At the moment with which we are now concerned the British line from Loos southward lay just west of the Double Crassier : east of Souchez and Neuville St. Vaast : and thence in a sharp curve eastward to cover Roclincourt. The key of all this area was the Vimy ridge, which dominated the British lines on the Souchez, as the Messines ridge dominated the southern part of the Ypres Salient. Our front crossed the Scarpe just west of Blangy, and south of the Arras–Cambrai road came in contact with the Siegfried Line from Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines onward. Beaurains was now ours, and Arras was, therefore, free from its old encirclement on the south. Here, where the Picardy wolds break down into the flats of the Scheldt, long low spurs reach out to the eastward, separating the valleys of the Scarpe, the Cojeul, and the Sensée. Their sides are scored with smaller valleys, and on their crests are various hillocks—such as Telegraph Hill, south of Tilloy, and the more considerable height above Monchy-le-Preux. It is a pockety country—the last foothills of the uplands of Northern France, and, like all foothills, a strong position for any defence.

Haig had a formidable problem before him. The immediate key of the area was Vimy ridge, the capture of which was necessary to protect the flank of any advance farther south. It was clear that no strategic result could be obtained unless the Drocourt–Quéant switch was breached, and that meant an advance of well over six miles. But this position was still in the making ; and, if the fates were kind, and the first three German systems could be carried at a rush, there was good hope that the Drocourt–Quéant line would never be manned, and that the drive of the British,

assisted by the great French attack on the Aisne, might bring them to Douai and Cambrai. It was a hope, but no more. A result so far-reaching demanded a combination of fortunate chances, which as yet had not been vouchsafed to us in any battle of the campaign.

The city of Arras, situated as it was less than a mile inside the British lines, might well have shared the fate of Ypres. It was, like Ypres, the neck of the bottle, and through it and its environs went all the transport for the front between the Scarpe and the Cojeul. But, strangely enough, it had for two years been a place of comparative peace. It had been badly shelled, but mainly in the autumn and winter of 1914. The cathedral, a poor rococo edifice in the Palladian manner, had been wholly destroyed, and looked far nobler in its ruin than it had ever done in its integrity. The beautiful old Hôtel de Ville had been wrecked, and much damage had been done among the exquisite Spanish houses of the Grande Place. Few buildings had altogether escaped, but the place was a desert and not a fragment. It was still a habitable though a desolated city. Entering it by the Baudimont Gate on a summer's day, the stranger saw the long white street running intact towards the railway station, and it was not till he looked closer that he noted shell-marks and broken windows and the other signs of war. There were many hundreds of civilians still living there, and children could be seen playing on the pavement. Visitors came often, for it was the easiest place in all France from which to enter the first lines. Across the railway a short walk in communication trenches, or even on the open road, and you were in the actual battle-front near Blangy or in the faubourg of St. Sauveur. One inn at least was still open, where men could dine in comfort and then proceed to their posts in the line. But up till April 1917 the place had the air of a tomb. It was like a city stricken by the plague, whole yet tenantless. Especially eerie did it seem in the winter twilight, when in the long echoing streets the only sign of life was an occasional British soldier or a hurrying peasant woman, and the rumble of the guns beyond Vimy alone broke the depressed silence. The gaunt choir of the cathedral rose like a splendid headstone in a graveyard.

At the beginning of April Arras awoke to an amazing change. Its streets and lanes once more became full of life, and the Roman arch of the Baudimont Gate saw an endless procession of troops and transport. A city makes a difficult base for a great attack. It must be the route of advancing infantry and their billeting area,

and it is a mark which the enemy guns can scarcely miss. To minimize this danger, the Allied generals had recourse to a bold plan. They resolved to assemble in this section their armies underground. After the fashion of old French towns, Arras had huge ancient sewers, like those of Paris which may be read of in *Les Misérables*. A map of them was found, and the underground labyrinth was explored and enlarged. Moreover, the town had grown over the quarries from which the older part had been built, and these also were discovered. The result was that a second city was created below the first, where three divisions could have been assembled in perfect security. The caverns were lit by electricity, and plans and signposts were put up as if it had been a tube railway station. As a matter of fact, the thing was not needed. The Germans shelled the town intermittently, but there was no real bombardment, and before Arras could be methodically assailed the enemy had been pushed many miles eastward.

The British front of attack was slightly over twelve miles long, from Givenchy-en-Gohelle in the north to a point just short of Croisilles in the south. Against the Vimy ridge lay the right of the First Army, Sir Julian Byng's Canadian Corps, with one British brigade. Then came the Third Army—between the Canadians and the Scarpe, Sir Charles Fergusson's 17th Corps; opposite Arras, Aylmer Haldane's 6th Corps; and south of it, astride the Cojeul, Snow's 7th Corps. In its constituents the army of assault was largely Scottish. Thirty-eight Scots battalions were destined to cross the parapets—a larger number than the British at Waterloo, and more than seven times the size of the force that Bruce commanded at Bannockburn.*

In the third week of March a systematic cutting of the enemy's wire began, and our heavy artillery shelled his back areas and communications. About Wednesday, 4th April, the British guns woke along the whole sector. There was a steady bombardment of all the enemy positions, more especially the great fortress of the Vimy ridge. Wonderful counter-battery work was done, and battery after battery of the enemy was put out of action, located partly by direct observation from the air, and partly by our new device for sound identification. These were days of clear, cold spring weather, with the wind in the north-east, and from dawn to dark our air-

* The dispositions from left to right were :—*First Army:* Canadian Corps (4th, 3rd, 2nd, 1st Canadian Divisions), and British 13th Brigade. *Third Army:* 17th Corps (51st, 34th, 4th, 9th Divisions), 6th Corps (37th, 15th, 12th, 3rd Divisions), 7th Corps (14th, 56th, 30th, 21st Divisions). The 37th and 4th Divisions were to go through after the road had been opened.

planes fought a mighty battle on their own account. In the history of air-fighting that week must rank as an epoch, for it was a last desperate struggle on the enemy's part to defend his side of the line against our encroaching supremacy. It was a week of heavy losses, for at all costs the foe must be blinded, and the British airmen kept up one continuous offensive. Forty-eight of our own planes failed to return, and forty-six of the enemy's were destroyed or driven down out of control. The attackers, as was natural, paid the heavier price.

The "preparation" was intense till Sunday, 8th April. That day was perfect weather, with a foretaste of spring. A lull seemed to fall upon the British front, and the ear-splitting din of the past week died away into sporadic bombardments. It is possible that this sudden quiet outwitted the enemy. He was perfectly aware of the coming attack, and he knew its area and objective.* He had expected it each day, and each day had been disappointed. On the Sunday he began to reply, and rained shells at intervals into the streets of Arras. But he did little harm. The troops of attack there were waiting comfortably in cellars and underground assembly stations. In the late evening the weather changed. The wind shifted, and blew up to rain and squalls of snow. During the night there were long spells of quiet, broken by feverish outbursts of enemy fire from Vimy to Croisilles. Our own batteries were for the most part silent.

Zero hour was 5.30 on the morning of Easter Monday. At 4 a.m. a drizzle had begun which changed presently to drifts of thin snow. It was intensely cold, and it was scarcely half-light, so that the troops waiting for the signal saw before them only a dark mist flecked with snowflakes. But at the appointed moment the British guns broke into such a fire as had been yet seen on no battle-ground on earth. It was the first hour of the Somme repeated, but a hundredfold more awful. As our men went over the parapets they felt as if they were under the protection of some supernatural power, for the heaven above them was one canopy of shrieking steel. There were now no enemy front trenches; soon there were no second-line trenches; only a hummocky waste of craters and broken wire. Within forty minutes all the German first position was captured, and our men were moving steadily against the second, while our barrage crept relentlessly before them.

* The Germans had intended a local advance between Lens and Arras at the beginning of April. On the 6th Ludendorff realized that a British offensive was coming, and ordered up his reserves behind the VI. Army.—*My War Memories* (Eng. trans.), II., p. 419.

On the left wing the Canadians with a bound reached the crest of Vimy, and swarmed on to the tableland from which the ground fell away to the flat industrial area between Lens and Douai. Few finer pieces of dogged fighting were seen in the campaign. The guns had done the work for them till they were beyond the crest, but after that, over a mile of plateau, they had to fight their way from shell-hole to shell-hole under a deluge of rifle and machine-gun fire. Before nine o'clock all the Vimy ridge was ours, except its northern corner and the high point marked Hill 145. Between the Canadians and the Scarpe the 17th Corps had taken La Folie Farm, and were advancing on Thelus. In front of Arras the 6th Corps had overrun Blangy, and were facing the formidable Railway Triangle, while farther south Tilloy-lez-Mofflaines had fallen, and, south of it, the great fortress called the Harp. The Harp was such a place as in the early days of the Somme would have baffled us for a month or more. It was stronger than Contalmaison or Pozières or Guillemont. It was rushed with the assistance of a batch of tanks, some of which stuck fast in its entanglements, while others forced their way through to the plain beyond.

By 9.30 the whole of the German second position had fallen, except a short length west of Bailleul. By the early afternoon the enemy had been forced from the two worst points south of the Scarpe—Observation Ridge and the Railway Triangle. This last, formed by the junction of the Lens and Douai lines, was a formidable obstacle, bristling with machine guns, and for a little it stayed the advance of the Scottish division on the left of the 6th Corps—the 15th Division which had captured Loos and Martinpuich, and had long ranked as part of the *corps d'élite* of the British army. But our artillery came to their aid, and presently they were surging eastward; and in a hollow called Battery Valley, between the German second and third positions, they made enormous captures of enemy guns. By the evening that division had taken the German third line at Feuchy, and to the north of the Scarpe the right of the 17th Corps—the Scottish and South African troops of the 9th Division—had carried Athies, and the 4th Division, passing through them, had taken Fampoux village and Hyderabad Redoubt and broken into the German third line on a front of two and a half miles. The Feuchy switch line had now gone, and the enemy front had been utterly destroyed. He had no prepared position short of the Drocourt–Quéant line, and that was still in the making.

But the weather was on his side. The ground was sodden,

and our guns took time to bring up. He was holding it with machine guns in pockets, which prevented the use of cavalry for what was the true duty of cavalry. Had we possessed a light type of tank in reasonable numbers the rout could have been made complete. As it was, there was no chance of a dramatic *coup de grâce*. The infantry could only push forward slowly and methodically, and complete their capture of the German third position. In wild weather on Tuesday, 10th April, the Canadians carried Hill 145, and with it gained the whole of Vimy ridge. The relics of the 14th Bavarians, which had formed the defence, were withdrawn and sent to recruit on the Eastern front. To the south the village and wood of Farbus were taken, and that evening, after hard fighting, the 6th Corps reached the hill where stood the village of Monchy-le-Preux. Next day, the 11th, in a snowstorm, Monchy was carried, with the assistance of detachments of cavalry,* but not without heavy losses. It was a key position of the country between the Scarpe and the Sensée, standing on the ridge of a little plateau some ninety feet above the surrounding levels. Its approaches on four sides were sunken roads lined with machine guns. In the end it fell to a converging attack from the north and west, but its defence showed that the enemy was recovering from his first demoralization. Moreover, he had begun to counter-attack.

We may take the evening of Wednesday, 11th April, as the end of the first stage of the Battle of Arras. It was now necessary for the infantry attack to wait on the advance of the guns, and meantime to devote itself to minor operations to round off its gains. It had been a remarkable success, won at comparatively small cost by a preparation in which no detail had been neglected. Aircraft, artillery, infantry, and tanks had worked in perfect combination. The result had been that on a front of twelve miles we had broken through all the German defences, and come half-way to the Drocourt–Quéant line. We had carried two miles of the northern end of the Siegfried Line. The exploits of each corps in

* The cavalry had been brought east of Arras on the afternoon of the 9th, in case the break in the German third line should be sufficiently wide to permit the use of mounted troops. They were held up, however, by the unbroken wire south of Feuchy and by Monchy-le-Preux hill. Small bodies were employed during the afternoon to maintain touch with the troops on the two sides of the Scarpe. On the 10th an attempt to pass them south and north of Monchy was defeated by the enemy machine-gun fire. They took part next day in the capture of Monchy, when Brigadier-General Bulkeley-Johnson fell. On the 12th they were withdrawn west of Arras. It was a clear proof that cavalry were useless for pushing on through a gap in a modern trench line. The event might well have been foreseen and this needless slaughter avoided.

action had been magnificent. The Canadians at Vimy had stormed the last of the great German view-points south of the Lys. By their speed they had cut off large numbers of the enemy in honeycombs of the hill, and had taken over 4,000 prisoners. The 17th Corps had won desperate fortresses like the Hyderabad Redoubt, where a general and all his staff were captured, and had between three and four thousand prisoners, the South African Brigade taking nearly as many as it had effectives in action. The 6th Corps had dealt with the Harp and the Railway Triangle, and by their doings in Battery Valley were responsible for the larger number of guns taken. Altogether in the three days something over 12,000 prisoners and 150 guns were captured, and the guns were speedily turned into British weapons. Byng formed a "1st, 2nd, and 3rd Pan-Germanic group" out of the batteries which fell to his share. These were the largest captures so far made by the British army in a like period of time.

But no victory can truly be measured by booty, and the essence of the achievement lay in the breach made in the German wall. It was an undeniable breach, the thing we had hoped for at Loos and on two occasions during the Somme. But it was a breach of which full use could not be made. Modern war is so intricate that against an enemy with a proper equipment it must be slow. The lightning dash is forbidden, since the speed of an advance is the speed of its slowest unit—the guns and their munitionment. Cavalry could not be used as in old days, since a machine-gun outpost could frustrate any cavalry action, and the true weapon, the tank, had not yet been perfected. The first days of the Battle of Arras confirmed in their views those who had always held that on the Western front there could be no short cut to success. The Germans, it is true, had been able to drive back Russians and Rumanians in a war of movement, but in both cases they fought against troops who had an imperfect military machine to support them. Against an enemy approximately our equal we could hope for no spectacular triumph yet awhile. The Somme tactics still held the field—the limited objective, progress by slow and calculated stages, a steady, grinding attrition—since the *débâcle* of Russia was not yet foreseen. Some day these methods would wear thin the stoutest metal, and then the end would come. Haig had never subscribed to the heresy, common at that time in certain civilian and military circles, that by some superior cleverness the fruits of victory might be reaped without the enemy being beaten. The first and only task was to beat the enemy, and against an enemy so well equipped, so stub-

born, and, on the whole, so well led, success could not be won by any bold, sensational strategy. Each time we struck we won a victory, though not *the* victory; but each time brought us nearer to the desired goal.

On 12th April we improved our position on each flank of the new battlefield. On the south we took, with the assistance of tanks, the two villages of Wancourt and Héninel, which faced each other from opposite banks of the Cojeul, and with them added to our gains another 1,000 yards of the Siegfried Line. It was a day of snowstorms, and on our left, north of the Vimy ridge, the Canadians took the two small hills, known as the Pimple and the Bois-en-Hache, on each side of the Souchez stream, behind which the enemy might have concentrated troops for a counter-attack. This last success drove the Germans back upon their third line from Gavrelle northward, and compelled them to bethink themselves of the defences of Lens. The wind had veered to the south and brought squalls of rain, through which on the two following days we pressed hard on their retreat. A wide tract of country from Fampoux to just south of Lens became ours, including the villages of Vimy, Bailleul, Willerval, Givenchy-en-Gohelle, Angres, and the town of Lievin. There fell, too, the Double Crassier, south of Loos, which had once before been ours. Looking from the ridge, our men saw clusters of red-brick dwellings, broken by slag-heaps, tall chimneys, and the headgear of mines, and now obscured by the smoke from burning buildings and the debris of explosions. In all the mining suburbs of Lens—the *cités* named after divers saints—the enemy strove to make a great destruction, but he was driven out before he could complete his work. We captured vast quantities of stores and ammunition, truckloads of tools, pioneer dumps, and many guns, including four 8-inch howitzers, which he had not had time to remove.

But the rough weather had given him his breathing space, and his resistance was hardening. More guns had come up, and new divisions had arrived from the Eastern front. From the 14th onward counter-strokes were frequent south of the Scarpe, and on the morning of Sunday, the 15th, an attack by five regiments of the Prussian Guard was launched on a six-mile front astride the Bapaume-Cambrai road, from Hermies to Noreuil, against the 1st Australian Corps under Birdwood. The assault failed completely, except at Lagnicourt, where for a moment the enemy gained a footing, only to be driven out an hour later. He left 300 prisoners in our hands and 1,500 dead in front of our positions. There was

also heavy fighting around Monchy, where the famous 3rd Bavarians were in action against the not less famous 29th Division. Their advance up Monchy hill in five columns was broken by our guns, and their losses were not less than 4,000.

Next day, Monday, 16th April, saw the great French attack on the southern part of the Siegfried Line, the consideration of which belongs to the following chapter. As we shall see, its success fell far short of the hopes of its commanders, and it was incumbent on Haig to press his advance towards Douai and Cambrai in order to divert the enemy strength from the Aisne heights. So far as the British armies were concerned, their main task was finished, and their duty now was subsidiary—to distract the enemy from Nivelle rather than to win their own special objectives. At dawn on Monday, the 23rd, the British attacked on an eight-mile front on both banks of the Scarpe against the line Gavrelle–Rœux–Guémappe–Fontaine-lez-Croisilles. South-west of Lens, in a subsidiary assault, we advanced our front along the Souchez stream. The 17th Corps carried Gavrelle on the Arras-Douai road, and the enemy defences for two and a half miles south as far as Rœux cemetery. Beyond the Scarpe the 6th Corps won Guémappe, on the Arras–Cambrai highway. It was a day of sustained and desperate fighting, continued during the night and prolonged far into the next morning. The enemy was in strength, and counter-attacked fiercely; and though some of his units made but a poor resistance, the 3rd Bavarians lived up to their old renown. Seven German divisions were engaged, and by the evening of the 25th we had advanced our line on the whole front from one to two miles, and by the capture of Guémappe had won the key of the country between the Cojeul and the Sensée. This section of the battle cost us dear; but it cost the enemy more, and his losses in these days' fighting were as high as any that he had suffered during the campaign. He left 3,400 prisoners in our hands, and it was estimated that the total casualties of the defence were at least thrice those of the assault. His misfortunes were due to the fact that he had to launch his counter-attacks across ground swept by our artillery, and, since the fight was fought in clear weather, he had no shelter from our omnipresent aircraft.

The 28th and 29th of April saw the battle renewed north of the Scarpe. The enemy had on the 9th lost his third position from Fampoux for some miles southward, but on the left of our front he had been in his second position till the 12th, and at the moment was holding his third line of defence from Gavrelle north-

ward. On the 28th we drove him out of it on a two-mile front at Arleux-en-Gohelle, and won ground at Oppy and on the western slopes of Greenland Hill between Gavrelle and Rœux, taking over 1,000 prisoners. South of the Scarpe we advanced our line to the north of Monchy. He was fighting stubbornly for his Douai positions, for we were already half-way from Arras to that city, and only the Drocourt–Quéant line barred the way. The country-side falls in long, easy slopes to the Douai plain, and no hill or river gave a natural protection. The Germans had to stop the gap with men, and let it be freely admitted that they showed a stalwart resolution.

The close of April marked the end of the Battle of Arras as originally planned. That plan, in its ultimate objective, involved the destruction of the northern pivot of the Siegfried Line, and the first step to the reduction of the whole position. But the failure of the French at the southern pivot made this great scheme impossible in the immediate future. Two tasks now lay before the British Commander-in-Chief. The scheme of the attack on the Siegfried pivots had not been his. His original plan had been to cut off the enemy in the Arras–Bapaume salient by flank attacks and win at the same time the Vimy ridge. After the German retreat he would have contented himself, had he been solely responsible, with carrying Vimy, and then would have flung his weight into the Flanders operation. The action against the Siegfried pivots was Nivelle's conception, accepted by the Allied Governments, and, once begun, it could not readily be broken off. Sir Douglas Haig had, therefore, to work with a double aim. He had to continue his efforts in the Arras area, partly to ease the pressure on the new French positions on the Aisne, partly in order that, when the time came for breaking off the battle in this sector, he should be able to leave his front in a favourable position for future operations. Likewise he had to prepare for that great assault upon the German right wing in Flanders which he had long ago determined should be the main British enterprise of the summer. The fighting of May was, therefore, in a different category from that of April. The initial impetus had gone, the main strategical end had not been attained, and, as during the last phase of the Somme, it was an affair of local offensives and limited objectives.

The main attack was made on Thursday, 3rd May, on a twelve-mile front from the Acheville–Vimy road, north of Arleux, to a

point in the Siegfried Line at Bullecourt, south of the Sensée. Its object was to distract the enemy in view of a new French attack impending on the Aisne. Our troops crossed the parapets at 3.45 a.m., just before dawn, and were faced by a stubborn resistance. On our left the Canadians of the First Army broke through the strong Oppy–Méricourt line, and took the village of Fresnoy, crippling the German 15th Reserve Division, which had just been brought up preparatory to a counter-attack for the recovery of Arleux. In the wood north of Oppy we forced our way forward, encountering the 1st and 2nd Reserve Divisions of the Prussian Guard. On both banks of the Scarpe, at Rœux and the ridge called Infantry Hill east of Monchy, we advanced our front, and farther south made progress near Chérisy. On the right the 2nd Australian Division of the Fifth Army carried the front and support trenches of the Siegfried Line * at Bullecourt, and parties of advanced troops actually reached the Quéant–Fontaine-lez-Croisilles road beyond. Our prisoners numbered close on 1,000. We were not left in quiet possession of our gains. At once the enemy counter-attacked with determination, and his artillery shelled heavily our new positions. The struggle lasted all day and far into the night, and under the pressure of the incessant attacks our centre gradually retired, till, except for small lengths of line at Fontaine-lez-Croisilles and on both banks of the Scarpe, it was back in the trenches it had occupied before the assault began. Here the enemy was stayed. He had compelled us to relinquish our winnings, but he could not recover any of the ground he had formerly lost. On our flanks we fared better. The Canadians clung to Fresnoy, and the Australians still held the Siegfried support line at Bullecourt.

The situation now resolved itself into a struggle for three points on which the enemy set high value—Fresnoy, Rœux, and Bulle-

* Some idea of the strength of the Siegfried position may be gained from the following details. There were two main lines—the first line and the support line. One hundred and twenty-five yards in front of the first line was a belt of wire 25 feet broad, and so thick that it was impossible for a man lying on the ground to see through it. In the line itself were double machine-gun emplacements of ferro-concrete 125 yards apart, and other lesser emplacements were dotted all over it. The communication trenches were exceptionally broad and deep. More belts of wire defended the support line, which was the main line of defence. Here a continuous tunnel had been dug in the chalk at a depth of over 40 feet. It had been constructed entirely by Russian prisoners, and every 35 yards or so were exits with flights of forty-five steps. The tunnel was roofed, lined and bottomed with 9-inch by 3-inch timbers, and had numerous rooms opening off it. It was lit throughout by electricity. Large 9-inch trench mortars with concrete emplacements stood at the traverses, and were fed with ammunition from below. Strong machine-gun positions covered the line from behind.

court. On the 8th of May, very early in the morning, after a heavy bombardment, a German division—the 15th Reserve—attacked our positions north-east of Fresnoy village, which, since the enemy held Acheville and Méricourt, were dangerously exposed. They entered some of our trenches, but were ejected by a counter-attack. At 8 a.m., supported by two other divisions, the 4th Guard Reserve and the 5th Bavarians, which cut in on the flank, they renewed the attack on a wide front, and compelled us to fall back from the salient formed by Fresnoy village and wood. Next day we retook the wood, and held it thereafter. Fresnoy was one of the few cases in the campaign of a place won by us and held for more than twenty-four hours which the enemy succeeded in recapturing.

In the centre there was steady fighting. On 5th May, and again on the night of 10th May, we were busy pressing forward south of the Scarpe in the neighbourhood of Infantry Hill. There were many counter-attacks, and one on the night of 10th May, when *flammenwerfer* were employed, was of exceptional violence and complete futility. The following night, 11th May, we attacked in some force on both sides of the Scarpe. On the south bank the 56th Division took Cavalry Farm, on the Arras–Cambrai road, and a mile of trenches north of it. On the left bank of the river the 4th Division carried Rœux cemetery and the Chemical Works in the neighbourhood of Rœux station, taking some hundreds of prisoners. On 12th May we took the enemy's position on a front of one and a half miles between Rœux and Greenland Hill; and by the 14th the whole of Rœux village was captured by the 51st Division.

But the great episode of this final stage of the Battle of Arras was the struggle in the Siegfried Line around Bullecourt, where the Lehr Regiment of the 3rd Guard Division—the "Cockchafers"—toiled to win back the ground lost on 3rd May, and the Australians and British troops of the Fifth Army sought in their turn to increase their winnings. The massive strength of the Siegfried Line was hard enough to force; but not less formidable were the machine-gun positions behind—linked concreted pits protected by steel coverings, through an orifice of which the guns fired a few inches above the level of the ground. The Australians had carried this section on 3rd May with superb audacity, and they showed the same coolness in defence. But the situation was a grave one; for on the left Bullecourt village projected in a kind of promontory, and to the right was the Riencourt ridge with

Quéant behind it, and both positions were occupied by the enemy. The Australians' hold on the Siegfried Line was the ugliest kind of salient. On 7th May the 7th Division gained a footing in the south-east corner of Bullecourt, and next day ten of our men were rescued who had been in Bullecourt since the 3rd of May. By the 12th the greater part of the village was in our possession, though parties of the enemy still held out in the south and south-western outskirts. Then came the counter-attacks, more especially upon the Australians in the Siegfried Line. The Lehr Regiment had rehearsed every detail of their work; but two minutes after the assault was delivered at dawn on the 15th the plan had melted into air. The Australians, gallantly assisted by London troops, turned their defence into a brilliant offensive. On 17th May the 58th and 62nd Divisions completed the capture of Bullecourt village. On the 20th the 33rd Division struck at the Siegfried Line between that point and Fontaine-lez-Croisilles. On the morning of that day, after a stiff fight, the whole of the enemy's front position was captured. In the evening we attacked the support line, and carried it on a front of a mile. All counter-attacks were repulsed, and on the 26th and 27th of May we secured our position beyond danger.

The battle was now drawing to its close. On Sunday, 3rd June, our advanced posts were attacked south-west of Chérisy, and on the same day we gained and lost ground in an attack by the Canadians on the electric power-station south of the Souchez river. On the 5th we won the power-station, and on the 6th we took a mile of the enemy position north of the Scarpe on the western slopes of Greenland Hill. But these actions were in the nature of feints, for the centre of gravity had now shifted north of the Lys.

On 5th May the French carried the Craonne plateau, and thereby won their immediate object on the Aisne. Haig's subsequent operations had, therefore, been either for the purpose of securing or rounding off the ground won, or of misleading the enemy by a show of activity in an area not seriously threatened. On the 4th and 5th of May an Allied conference in Paris agreed to the British plan of an immediate Flanders offensive—a decision which marked the formal abandonment of Nivelle's policy. Already the Arras front was being thinned, and troops and guns were moving northward. On 20th May the French extended their line to the Omignon river, thereby taking over again that part of the front which they had relinquished to the British on 26th February. As early as

24th May the German bulletins reported great activity in the district between Ypres and Armentières, and in the early days of June they daily informed the world that the British artillery was shelling the Wytschaete–Messines ridge. They foresaw a new offensive, but they did not guess how deadly that offensive was to be.

The Battle of Arras may be regarded with some truth as an action complete in itself. It lasted just over a month. It was a limited victory—that is to say, it attained completely its immediate objectives; but owing to events outside the control of the British Command, it did not produce the strategical result upon the Western front as a whole which was its ultimate design. It was, therefore, an action on the Somme model, a stage in the process of attrition, the value of which must be measured in terms of its effect upon the enemy's *moral* and the efficiency of his military machine. Judged by such standards it compared brilliantly with every previous British advance. In a month we took more than 20,000 prisoners, 257 guns (of which 98 were of heavy calibre), 227 trench mortars, and 470 machine guns.* If we contrast the first twenty-four days of the Somme with the first twenty-four days of Arras, we shall find that in the latter battle we took four times the amount of territory, engaged double the number of German divisions, and had half the casualties. We had advanced many stages in our knowledge of the new methods of war.

But such figures did not exhaust the criterion. The vital fact was that we had defeated the enemy's plan. When his too hasty retreat to the Siegfried Line deprived him of the chance of taking the Allies at a disadvantage, he determined to avoid battle, to create a stalemate on the West, and to set his hopes of victory on the success of his submarine campaign. The first day of Arras shattered that illusion. He lost the Vimy ridge, one of his most cherished observation posts; he lost Bullecourt, where the Wotan Line joined the main Siegfried position; he lost between six and seven miles of the cherished Siegfried Line itself. The new defences of which he had boasted had proved no more impregnable than Thiepval or Guillemont. He had had 104 divisions in action, and of these seventy-four by the end of May had to be withdrawn to refit. The whole German plan of defence was based on the impregnability of the old lines from the sea to Arras, and of the

* Between 1st July and 18th November, on the Somme, we took 38,000 prisoners, 29 heavy guns, 96 field guns, 136 trench mortars, and 514 machine guns.

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Siegfried Line from Arras to the Aisne. When he lost ground he was compelled to throw in large numbers of his best troops in the attempt either to win it back or to gain time for the construction of other lines in the rear. We therefore achieved our major purpose of inflicting great losses on the enemy and using up his reserves. It was still hammer play: we were still painfully destroying the wall, and had not reached that nodal point which would involve a widespread cataclysm. But each blow of our hammer had gone truly home.

Arras, therefore, though the earlier and better plan of Haig had been relinquished, emphasized and continued the effect of the Somme battle, and—had the Russian front remained intact—would have brought Germany's strength very near to breaking point. Already there were indications that, in spite of Hindenburg's new divisions, she was having difficulties with her manpower. New regiments, for example, which had been destined to form new divisions, were broken up to provide drafts for divisions shattered in the battle. More significant still, there was a general reduction in the establishment of infantry battalions from 1,000 to 750. But the slow weakening of the German machine was best shown by the new tactical device, the use of *Sturmtruppen* or *Stosstruppen*,* which the course of the action revealed. Germany had always been inclined to bemuse herself with the idea of "crack" corps, from the Pomeranian giants of the Great Elector to the Prussian Guards and the Brandenburgers of the present campaign. To some extent the idea was a just one: each army has its units who are respected beyond others; but in Germany's case the practice was a contradiction of her whole theory of war. This skimming of the cream from the army left each time the residuum weaker; in her efforts to raise the drooping *moral* of the ordinary line Germany still further depressed it. Moreover, the practice spoiled the "machine." In the old warfare a picked cohort of knights might cut its way through a mob of footmen, but with the mass-armies of Germany the foundation was the equal discipline and the even efficiency of every unit. For in a machine one wheel should not be of better workmanship or one crank of finer temper than the rest, since the strength of the machine is not its strongest but its weakest part. The well-oiled and remorseless modern

* A battalion of *Stosstruppen* was attached about this time to each army corps. This battalion contained four companies of assault, each 100 strong—a machine-gun company with six machine guns, a company of bombers, a company of flame-throwers, and a battery of assault. The battalion commander had usually a captain's rank. Motor cars were attached to each battalion for rapid transport.

engine which had rolled smoothly through Flanders and Picardy in the early autumn of 1914 was changing to the archetypal form of barbarian armies—the sullen commonalty and the spirited and privileged few.

Such conclusions might reasonably have heartened the Allies in that month of May. For the utter ruin of Russia was not yet dreamed of—a ruin which was to enable Germany to mass everything in the West, to win a substantial superiority in numbers, and to use her shock-troops, begun as a counsel of despair, in a brilliant new tactical plan which brought her to the very edge of victory.

CHAPTER LXXVII.

THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

December 16, 1916–*June* 2, 1917.

Nivelle's Strategy—Attitude of new French Cabinet—The Heights of the Aisne—Defects in French Plan—The Attack begins—The Moronvillers Fighting—Pétain succeeds Nivelle—Foch Chief of General Staff—Last Days of the Battle—The French Mutinies.

(*Map*, p. 478.)

On 16th December 1916 Nivelle succeeded Joffre in command of the armies of France, and, as we have seen, altered the original plan for the coming spring. The new scheme had some of the features of the old: the British were to advance at Arras, and the French east of the Somme; and then when the enemy was confused by attacks in widely separated localities, the deadly blow was to be delivered in the south. But in designing this last stage Nivelle departed wholly from Joffre's conception and from the Somme tactics of a movement by steady stages to limited objectives. On the Aisne, where already he had fought as colonel of artillery and as divisional general, he hoped to break through at once between Vailly and Rheims, smash the southern portion of the Siegfried Line, and envelop the whole position. Verdun had brought him fame, and that fame had been won by enterprises of peculiar audacity and brilliance. His great winter battles there in 1916 had followed the Somme method, but Nivelle had never regarded this method as the final device in war. He had written to a friend: "The trench warfare which we have been waging on the same ground for two years is only one of the numerous forms of war—a form which cannot last for ever, because it cannot bring a decision. . . . Be sure that the essential principles of war, those of Napoleonic strategy, have lost none of their value. . . . The moment approaches when the decisive blow will be struck by the stronger and more resolute." He considered rightly that the last word had not been spoken in tactics, that new devices

might be found, and that the enemy's stolid strength might be broken by other means than slow sapping. His aim now was the " decisive blow "—not to weaken but to crush, not to " break up " but to " break through." With robust self-confidence he promised himself Laon as the result of the first day's action, and such a gain was inconceivable unless he really succeeded in crumbling the whole enemy defences. As in the previous winter at Verdun, he told his Government precisely what he meant to do, and by what hour he would accomplish it ; and to members of the Government, like M. Briand and General Lyautey, he communicated his own optimism and ardour.

But in the third week of March came a political crisis. M. Briand fell from power, and M. Ribot became Premier and M. Painlevé Minister of War. The last did not share Nivelle's cheerfulness, and, like Foch and Pétain, had grave doubts of the whole enterprise. He was alarmed at the shrinking man-power of France, and reluctant to incur further serious losses, and he was also critical of Nivelle's proposed methods and sceptical about the promised success. He found abundant support for his scepticism among other generals, and subjected the Commander-in-Chief to such constant interrogation that the latter was with difficulty dissuaded from resigning his post. Things came to a head on 3rd April, when Nivelle was summoned to a conference with the Premier and the Minister of War. Distracted by his cross-examination, the Commander-in-Chief was induced to hazard all, and promise that within three days the armies of attack should be on the Serre with thirty kilometres of new ground behind them. The civilian statesmen expressed their satisfaction, but three days later summoned the Commander-in-Chief to another conference, and again demanded that he should lay their doubts. The result was that Nivelle began his task with two serious handicaps : the perpetual questioning had weakened his confidence in himself, and, since the tale of it had gone abroad, had shaken the faith of the armies in their general. It is not easy for a soldier to venture everything when he has been warned that his Government expects him to be chary of losses.

Let us consider in greater detail the nature of the blow which Nivelle contemplated, and the area in which it was to be delivered. In the First Battle of the Aisne, in September 1914, the Allies had won the passage of the river from the forest of Laigue above Compiègne to Berry-au-Bac, where the Roman highroad from Rheims to Laon crosses by the most famous ford in France. At

one point the assault of the British 1st Corps had reached the Chemin des Dames north of Troyon and the crown of the Aisne plateau. But the German attack in January 1915 had driven a broad shallow wedge into that front, and given them the south bank of the river from Missy-sur-Aisne to a little east of Chavonne. From that date onward there had been no action of any significance between Soissons and Rheims. East of Rheims the western end of the Champagne–Pouilleuse had been part of the terrain of the great battle of September 1915, and in October of the same year Heeringen had striven in vain to cut the Rheims–Châlons railway by an attack between Prunay and Auberive. But since then the whole section had been stagnant, and thinly held by both sides, while the main conflict raged round Verdun and on the Somme. The retreat of the enemy during February and March 1917 had altered the configuration of the French front in the western end of the area. The advance along the heights south of the Ailette had brought their left just west of the village of Laffaux. Thence it ran to the Aisne west of Missy, and continued along the south bank to a mile or so east of Chavonne. From that point it turned to the north-east by Soupir, across the Aisne–Oise Canal below the tunnel, and so to Troyon and the Chemin des Dames. It then left the ridge, and continued below the south edge till it struck the marshy flats south of Craonne, whence it continued west of Ville-aux-Bois to Berry-au-Bac. From the Aisne crossing there it ran west of the Rheims–Laon highway to Bétheny, covered Rheims, and passed south of the Nogent l'Abbesse and Moronvillers heights to the upper streams of the Suippe.

This stretch of the front was in length some fifty miles, and its physical character was most intricately varied. The heights of the Aisne, on which a century before a foreign invader had defied the genius of Napoleon, were, as we knew to our cost, one of the strongest positions in Europe. The limestone plateau, curiously wooded and cut by deep ravines, had been turned by the enemy into a veritable fortress. The sides of the glens had been forested with barbed wire; tunnels had been driven through the ridge, which formed perfect concealed communications; machine guns had been cunningly emplaced at every angle of fire; and the many natural caves in the limestone had been converted into underground shelters and assembly stations. Moreover, he had all the view-points, and from the Chemin des Dames commanded everywhere the French lines. His only weakness was that he held an acute salient, the apex of which was south of the Aisne.

The first section, therefore, was the salient from Vauxaillon above the Ailette by Missy to Troyon on the Chemin des Dames, a front of some twenty miles. It was a region of long, narrow spurs abutting in bold bluffs on the river valley. Along the hog's back from which they sprung ran the western part of the Chemin des Dames. Of these spurs there were five specially notable—from west to east, those running from Laffaux to Missy; from above Allemant to Chivres; from Vaudesson to Vauxelles; from Malmaison to Vailly; and from Ostel to Chavonne. Each spur was serrated like a comb by ravines, and radiated under-features. The second section comprised the eastern end of the Aisne heights which culminated in the promontory of Craonne, rising from the plain like the hull of a ship at sea. Here the plateau narrowed at one place to the width of a hundred yards, and also reached its greatest elevation—over 650 feet—near the farm of Hurtebise. Its wooded sides rose steeply both from the Aisne and the Ailette. North of it, across the Ailette, rose a second broad plateau, for the most part lower than the Chemin des Dames ridge, but at its eastern end rising to nearly the same height. Beyond it again lay Laon upon its little hill. The third section extended from Craonne to Bétheny, a distance of some twelve miles, where the front, after leaving the marshy woods south of Craonne, entered the rolling Champagne country, unbroken save for the heights of Brimont and Fresnes, where the German guns were placed for the bombardment of Rheims. East of that city from Nogent l'Abbesse stretched for seven or eight miles as far as Auberive the wooded hills of the Moronvillers group. Such was the nature of the ground on which Nivelle designed to fight the coming battle.

It was a difficult terrain, for at all points save Troyon the enemy had the dominating positions. The idea in the mind of Nivelle was to make of the gap between Craonne and Brimont an alley into the plain of Laon. But this alley was everywhere commanded, and success was not possible at any one place unless it were simultaneously won at others. To win the alley the hills of Brimont and Fresnes must be turned on one side, and the Craonne heights secured on the other. But the Craonne ridge could not be won unless the western end of the Chemin des Dames was also mastered, and the alley would remain insecure on the south unless the enemy were driven from the Moronvillers upland. Moreover, in each section the tactical difficulties were immense, owing to the skilful siting of the German line.

When a problem so intricate presents itself to a commander

in the field the natural method is to take it in stages. But Nivelle, hoping to find the enemy already confused by the attacks in the north, resolved to make a bid for instantaneous success. His plan was to force the Aisne heights in one bold assault from west, south, and south-east; at the same moment to carry the Rheims heights from the north; and simultaneously to launch his centre through the gap between the two into the plain of Laon. Next day a fresh army would attack the Moronvillers *massif* to distract the German counter-attack, and protect his own right flank. In the centre he would use the new French tanks—machines less stout and solid than the British, but believed to possess greater speed. Pétain, in whose group-area lay the terrain of assault, was utterly sceptical about the scheme, so a new group was formed for the purpose under Micheler, the former commander of the Tenth Army. Nivelle proposed to put this group into action from the Ailette to Rheims—in order, the Sixth Army, under Mangin, between Laffaux and Hurtebise, and the Fifth Army, under Mazel, between Hurtebise and Rheims. The Tenth Army, under Duchesne, was in reserve. East of Rheims, the day after the main attack, the Fourth Army, under Anthoine, would begin the Moronvillers battle. It was by far the largest front of attack seen on the West since the Marne, and the divisions of assault to be employed were three times those which Haig had used at Arras. Whatever our verdict on the result, let us do justice to the audacity and courage of Nivelle's conception. Like Browning's Grammarian, he "ventured neck or nothing":

> "That low man goes on adding one to one,
> His hundred's soon hit:
> This high man, aiming at a million,
> Misses an unit."

Unhappily, in a war of life and death it is results that count and not loftiness of aim, and the hundred hit is more valuable than the million missed.

The plan was indeed doomed from the start. In the first place, it was not the culmination of an arpeggio of attack, as had been proposed; for Franchet d'Esperey, who attacked on 14th April near St. Quentin, failed utterly, being brought up sharp against the strongest part of the Siegfried defences. In the second place, the scheme was known in full detail to the enemy. In the middle of February a German raid in Champagne captured an order of a French division pointing clearly to a great French offensive on the Aisne in April. This set the Germans to the work of pre-

paration. In the area of attack lay their VII. Army under von Boehn, and the III. Army under von Einem, and between the two was interpolated Fritz von Below with part of the I. Army. Then on the night of April 4th they made prisoner a French non-commissioned officer carrying a document which gave the order of battle of the troops north of the Aisne and the various corps objectives. Never was a defence more amply forewarned. In the third place, the aim which Nivelle set before himself demanded forces in the perfection of physical and moral well-being—an army of "shock-troops"; and the French armies were weary, dispirited, out of temper, doubtful of their leader, and in the mood to listen to treasonable tales. Small blame to them, for they had been too highly tried. Many had had no leave for two years, and the small comforts which keep troops in good humour had been neglected. To launch an ambitious offensive with jaded and captious men was to court disaster. Let it be added that Nivelle himself had been compelled by the Government, before the battle, to spend much of his time away from his troops, and that he had already lost the high confidence of December. He had shifted his general headquarters from Chantilly to Beauvais, and then presently to Compiègne, and, confronted with the suspicion of the Cabinet and the hostility of certain of his colleagues, had already begun to fumble. To retain composure and conviction unshaken in the face of an all but universal scepticism required a character far different from Nivelle's gracious and buoyant temper.

But, even had there been none of these attendant misfortunes, the plans of the French general would still have been open to censure. He proposed to break through a strong enemy defence, but his tactical methods were not different from those already used for less ambitious objectives. His main conception was right: trench warfare could be ended, an enemy front could be not only pierced but crumbled; but he had not discovered the means. His tanks were mechanically imperfect, and there was no knowledge of their true tactical use. He did not appreciate the real character of the enemy defence. Indeed, he envisaged the whole battle with a strange amateurishness, for he thought that if his losses became too high he could easily break it off. Nivelle represents the first crude revolt against the Somme tactics, the tactics of attrition, as the conception of von Hutier, six months later, was the second stage in the change, and the tactics of Foch the ultimate solution.

On 6th April the French " preparation " began from the Ailette to Rheims. On 10th April it was extended to the eastward from the Thuizy–Nauroy road to Auberive. That day the civilian population of Rheims was evacuated, for the enemy had begun to shell the much-battered city, and inflict new wounds on its great cathedral. The weather was snowy and wet, and aircraft observation was badly crippled, so zero day, which had been fixed for the 14th, was postponed. The French bombardment rose in a crescendo till on Sunday, the 15th, every gun sounded on the fifty-mile front. That night saw a blizzard of sleet, but just at dawn came a clearing of the sky. At 6 a.m. on the 16th the first French infantry crossed the parapets, and almost at once the pall of storm closed in again on the battlefield.

The extreme French left—the 1st Colonial Corps—attacked the roots of the westernmost spur around Laffaux. It took Moisy Farm, east of Vauxaillon, and surrounded Laffaux, but was driven back by a counter-stroke in the afternoon. Farther south, on the other side of the salient, the attack was directed against the Ostel–Chavonne ridge, a spur in some parts over 600 feet high. The French crossed the Aisne, broke through the two German lines on its northern bank, entered Chavonne, and struggled all day for the southern under-feature of the spur, which was named Les Grinons. The main assault failed, and by the evening Mangin's centre was forced back to the edge of the river. But on the right a chasseur battalion had stormed another under-feature called Mont des Sapins, and, in spite of many counter-attacks and a constant rain of bullets from the machine guns concealed in the shattered woods, it clung to its winnings, and held the approaches to the farm of La Cour de Soupir, on the main ridge. Farther east the little spur which runs from Courtecon to Moussy had been forced, and Moroccan infantry from Troyon had pushed westward along the Chemin des Dames, and cut off the retreat of the enemy troops in Chivy.

But the main attack in this section was to the east, where two corps had advanced along the crest of the plateau. Hurtebise Farm, at the narrows of the ridge, was carried by Marchand's 10th Colonial Division, and on the right the French entered the skirts of Craonne village. Beyond that lay the gap which it was hoped would prove the alley to the plain of Laon. Here Juvincourt was the immediate objective, and the approach was guarded by two little hills, outliers of the Craonne *massif*, the Bois des Buttes and the Bois des Boches, behind which lay the village of

Ville-aux-Bois. Each was a machine-gun fortress, excavated into galleries, and with dug-outs sixty feet deep. They had been severely pounded by the French artillery, but they were strongly held by two Bavarian battalions, and till they fell Ville-aux-Bois could not be won or any use made of the gateway into the plain. The Parisians of the 31st Infantry Regiment stormed and held the Bois des Buttes, and south of Ville-aux-Bois the two German lines between that village and the Aisne were carried by the tanks. The ground was not the most suitable for their work, and the fire from the Craonne heights and certain flaws in their mechanism put a large number of them out of action. But the evening saw the French well past Ville-aux-Bois on the south, and working up the hollow of the Miette towards Juvincourt. North of Ville-aux-Bois, however, they were firmly held by the machine-gun positions in Craonne, and the place itself was still untaken.

South of the Aisne, from Berry-au-Bac to Bétheny, the French front was curiously placed. From the Aisne to Le Godat it lay east of the Aisne–Marne Canal. From Le Godat to Courcy the canal was in front of it, and protected the German position, which was further supported by the Rheims–Laon railway embankment, and by the guns on the hill of Brimont. Here the French objective was the village of Loivre, and Berméricourt out in the plain, the possession of which would turn Fresnes and Brimont from the north. In the first assault the French carried Berméricourt, but lost it before the evening. Farther south the east bank of the canal was won, and Loivre fell to a dashing charge. On the right a Russian brigade, which had been in the Argonne the year before, took Courcy and its château, but beyond them the German guns on the Rheims hills prevented any further advance.

The first day of the battle closed in driving sleet. Much had been won, notably the crowning point of Hurtebise on the Aisne plateau, one sentinel hillock of the gap between Craonne and the Aisne, and positions threatening Brimont and Fresnes. Some 11,000 prisoners had been taken, and many guns. But Nivelle was still very far from the gates of Laon.

Tuesday, 17th April, dawned in a hurricane of wind and snow. At half-past five the battle began on the left with the capture of Les Grinons, which must involve the fall of Chavonne and La Cour de Soupir. At Hurtebise, at Ville-aux-Bois, at Loivre, at Berméricourt and Courcy the French beat off counter-attacks or secured their ground. Meantime east of Rheims Anthoine's Fourth

Army * had opened its attack upon the Moronvillers *massif*. This new area demands a brief description. Between Nogent l'Abbesse, east of Rheims, and Moronvillers lies a pocket of flat ground some seven miles wide around the little town of Beine. South and east of this basin, and bordering on the north the plain of Châlons, is a cluster of rounded hills, feathered with firwoods, the watershed between the Vesle and the Suippe. The highest part, Mont Haut, is a little over 600 feet. This *massif* constituted a defence on the eastern flank of the German positions around Rheims, and a defence on the south of the Bazancourt–Apremont railway, which had been one of the objectives in the Champagne battle of 1915. It formed also a dangerous view-point over the whole plain of Châlons. The enemy was well aware of its importance, and had defended its flanks with mighty works—on the west the trench system west of the Thuizy–Nauroy road, on the east the network between Auberive and Vaudesincourt. All the hills had been tunnelled and ringed with forts.

The main strategical object of the French attack was to uncover the heights east and north of Rheims held by the enemy, and to drive him from the south bank of the Aisne, between the Aisne–Marne Canal and the Suippe, and broaden the entrance into the plain of Laon for Nivelle's centre. The Fourth Army was compelled to make a frontal attack, owing to the great strength of the German flanks, and a frontal attack against such a hill fortress was an enterprise not to be lightly undertaken. The force consisted of two corps—the left under Hely d'Oissel, and the right under Dumas—a total of some 75,000 men. Anthoine, an old gunner, had not neglected his artillery. He had behind him such a massing of guns as had probably never been seen in an area of the same size, for he realized that the problem before him was insoluble unless the way was made plain for his infantry. On the night of 16th April the French front in the section of assault lay just north of the Rheims–St. Hilaire road. The first German line was in the flats at the foot of the hills, the second was halfway up the slopes, and the third line was the fortressed summits of Mont Cornillet, Mont Blond, Mont Haut, Mont Perthois, and Mont sans Nom. The attack began at 4.45 on the morning of the 17th. The result of the first day of the Moronvillers battle was that the French centre had pushed well into the hills, reaching the summits of Mont sans Nom and Mont Blond, and

* This army belonged to Pétain's Group of the Centre, and not to Micheler's special group.

falling just short of the summit of Cornillet; but that the left and right, fighting against strong German defences, were stayed in the enemy's second line. The beginning had been brilliant, but the result of the battle was still on the knees of the gods. Resolute counter-attacks might drive in the sides of the new salient, and cut off the vanguard on the hills.

On Wednesday, the 18th, the offensive was resumed throughout the whole battle-ground. On the west the knell was struck of the German salient on the western heights of the Aisne. The French left, already between Laffaux and Margival, pressed right across the Vregny spur, over the ravine which descends to Missy, and on to the Chivres ridge, where they took the village of Nanteuil-la-Fosse. Farther south, the French crossed the Aisne at Celles and Vailly, took Vailly, and rounded up two Saxon regiments on the spur to the north. Chavonne and Chivy had fallen during the night. Ostel was taken, so was Braye-en-Laonnois, and the plateau above it up to the edge of Courtecon. Great captures of guns, both field and heavy, were made, for the rush of Mangin's men had surprised all the enemy's calculations. Of all the western spurs he now possessed only the southern part of the Chivres spur, where stood the old fort of Condé, and the little Vaudesson–Vauxelles spur to the east of it.

On the night of the 17th an encircling movement was begun against Ville-aux-Bois from the south-east. By six o'clock on the morning of the 18th the French had carried the village and the remaining hillock, the Bois des Boches, which brought them to the great Rheims–Laon highroad. That afternoon came the first of the serious German counter-attacks. Two fresh divisions were launched against the front between the Miette and the Aisne; but the French barrage mowed them down in the open, and the French machine guns destroyed what the barrage had spared. Between the Aisne and Rheims there was little fighting; but that day in the Moronvillers region saw a steady advance. Both the summits of Mont Haut were taken, the highest point of the range, while Degoutte's Moroccan division pushed to the east of Mont sans Nom. So far no great German counter-attack had developed here, but the French aircraft brought news of fresh enemy divisions hastening to the scene of conflict. Meantime the French Tenth Army, hitherto in reserve, was brought in between the Fifth and the Sixth, between Hurtebise and Craonne.

On Thursday, the 19th, Mangin's left took Laffaux at last, and

the point of the Chivres spur fell. Fort Condé was blown up by its garrison, who tried to retreat northward along the ridge, but were for the most part destroyed by the French barrage. This marked the end of the German salient which had endured since January 1915. The enemy was pushed up to the hog's back, and the villages of Aizy and Jouy were taken. The position now was that the French held all the spurs except a small part of the extreme western one, while the Germans held the Chemin des Dames at its western and eastern ends, but had lost the crest of the ridge for some three miles between Troyon and Hurtebise. The gap between the eastern terminal of the heights and the Aisne was cleared, but not yet open, for the Craonne guns still commanded it. That day there was a little progress between Berry-au-Bac and Bétheny. The Moronvillers area saw violent counter-attacks by two new German divisions, the 5th and 6th, which had arrived from Alsace. It was one of the bloodiest days of the battle. The French, however, took the hill called the Téton, swayed all day on the summit, and when night fell were still in possession. Meantime, on Anthoine's right, Auberive had at last fallen to Degoutte's division.

On Friday, the 20th, the battle had temporarily died down in the west and centre, except for the capture of Sancy, the village at the narrows of the Chivres spur. But Anthoine was still heavily engaged. He was still held short of the summit of Cornillet, and that day was forced back from the crest of Mont Haut. On his right, however, Degoutte's Moroccans had worked their way well to the north-east of Mont sans Nom. The first phase of the action had now concluded. Anthoine had won most of his objectives east of the Thuizy–Nauroy road. He was close on the crest of Cornillet, he held Mont Blond, the lower summit of Mont Haut, Mont sans Nom, and Auberive. Above all, he had faced and defeated furious counter-attacks delivered by fresh German divisions. But he held a dangerous salient, and the enemy possessed admirable starting-points for counter-strokes in the future.

The closing days of April saw little activity on the left and centre of the battle-ground. There were counter-attacks in the Troyon area on the 20th, and on the 21st the French pushed north on the Chivres spur to beyond the narrows. On the 25th there were counter-attacks at Hurtebise and Vauxaillon, and an abortive German move between Rheims and La Pompelle. It was possible now to estimate gains. Between the Ailette and the Suippe, from the 16th to the 20th, there had been captured 21,000 prisoners and 183 guns. The enemy had lost all the banks of the Aisne from

Soissons to Berry-au-Bac and all the spurs of the Aisne heights, while the French held the centre of the tableland. The evacuation of Laon had begun. Out of fifty-two enemy divisions in reserve on 1st April, all but sixteen had been drawn in. But the dominating height of Craonne had not fallen, and the hills of Brimont and Fresnes had not been turned. Anthoine had won the better part of the Moronvillers *massif*, but not enough to complete any strategical purpose. In short, though there had been considerable gains of ground, the major strategy had failed. The road to Laon was as firmly barred as ever.

The result was to produce grave discouragement among the French people. It was not that their own losses were disproportionate, for, considering the nature of the obstacles attacked, they were on a moderate scale. But these losses were grossly exaggerated by ministers and journalists. The rumour was 120,000 casualties in the first three days, of whom 25,000 were dead; the real figures were respectively 75,000 and 15,000.* France's hopes had been keyed too high, and she suffered a corresponding reaction. She had been promised Laon, and she would not be content with Ville-aux-Bois. The tanks, from which she had looked for much, had done little, having proved themselves both slow and fragile; and the confidence in Nivelle's inspired audacity, induced by his Verdun exploits, had not been justified. As a consequence, there was a sudden reversion of feeling in favour of the cautious tactics of the Somme, and of Pétain and Foch, the chief exponents of those tactics in the French army. As early as 18th April Sir Douglas Haig was being sounded by the British Government, who saw what was about to happen in Paris, as to his views about the continuance of an offensive, and was arguing strongly in its favour. Meantime Nivelle had shifted the axis of his attack towards the north-east, and proposed to disengage Rheims by the capture of the Brimont hills. The story goes that Mazel, commanding the Fifth Army, was asked by M. Painlevé what would be the cost, and was told 60,000 men, and that that which the General meant for the effectives required the Minister of War took as the inevitable losses, with the result that the Brimont attack was countermanded. More conferences followed, to which Haig was summoned, and on the 29th the post of Chief of the General Staff at the Ministry of War was revived, and Pétain was appointed to fill it. He was to act

* The French losses from 16th to 29th April were 107,854 of all ranks, including 5,830 Russians. Many of them were very lightly wounded, and the total was no more than 6.55 of the effectives engaged.—See Rousset's *La Bataille de l'Aisne, 1920.*

as the adviser of the Cabinet on all questions connected with the campaign and the co-operation of the Allied armies ; and to advise on all operation plans proposed by the various commanders-in-chief, and on all technical problems of *matériel*, transport, and the economics of war. The change, it was obvious, was only the precursor of others. If Pétain's strategy was to be adopted, Pétain must be put in supreme command. It was clear to most observers that, except for Foch, he was the most considerable leader, both in brain and character, that France had as yet produced, and the only place for such a man was the highest. Nivelle was invited to resign, declined, and on 15th May was replaced by Pétain, while Fayolle succeeded to Pétain's old group command in the central sector. Foch followed Pétain as Chief of the General Staff in Paris.

Meantime the great fight was not over. Even if the major purpose had failed, much had been gained ; but these gains were still unmatured, and must be brought to that point where a true tactical advantage could be derived from them. In particular, the Craonne height must be won, and the Moronvillers range finally controlled. The new battle opened in the latter area. On 30th April, an hour after midday, the summit of Cornillet was won and lost, the top of Mont Perthois was reached, but the attack failed to carry the higher of the two summits of Mont Haut. On 4th May an unsuccessful attempt was made to turn Cornillet by the west. Anthoine once again held his hand, and brought up fresh troops, while his guns began a new " preparation."

On Friday, 4th May, the battle reopened in the west. The front of attack was from Craonne to Brimont, but the main fighting was on the left, where the French entered Craonne, and carried two and a half miles of the enemy's first line. Pushing through the ruined village, two French companies climbed the great terminal bluff, and dug themselves in on the very top of the ridge, on the plateau called California. The Germans counter-attacked against the French right with two fresh divisions from the direction of Aguilcourt and the mouth of the Suippe, but they effected nothing, and lost 700 prisoners. The French had now obtained a footing on the long-sought eastern end of the Chemin des Dames, a point of immense tactical importance, since in looking from it no subsidiary range beyond the Ailette blocked the vision, and the greater part of the railway between Rheims and Laon lay open to the eye. It remained to be seen if they would be suffered to hold it.

At dawn next day, Saturday, 5th May, the whole of the French

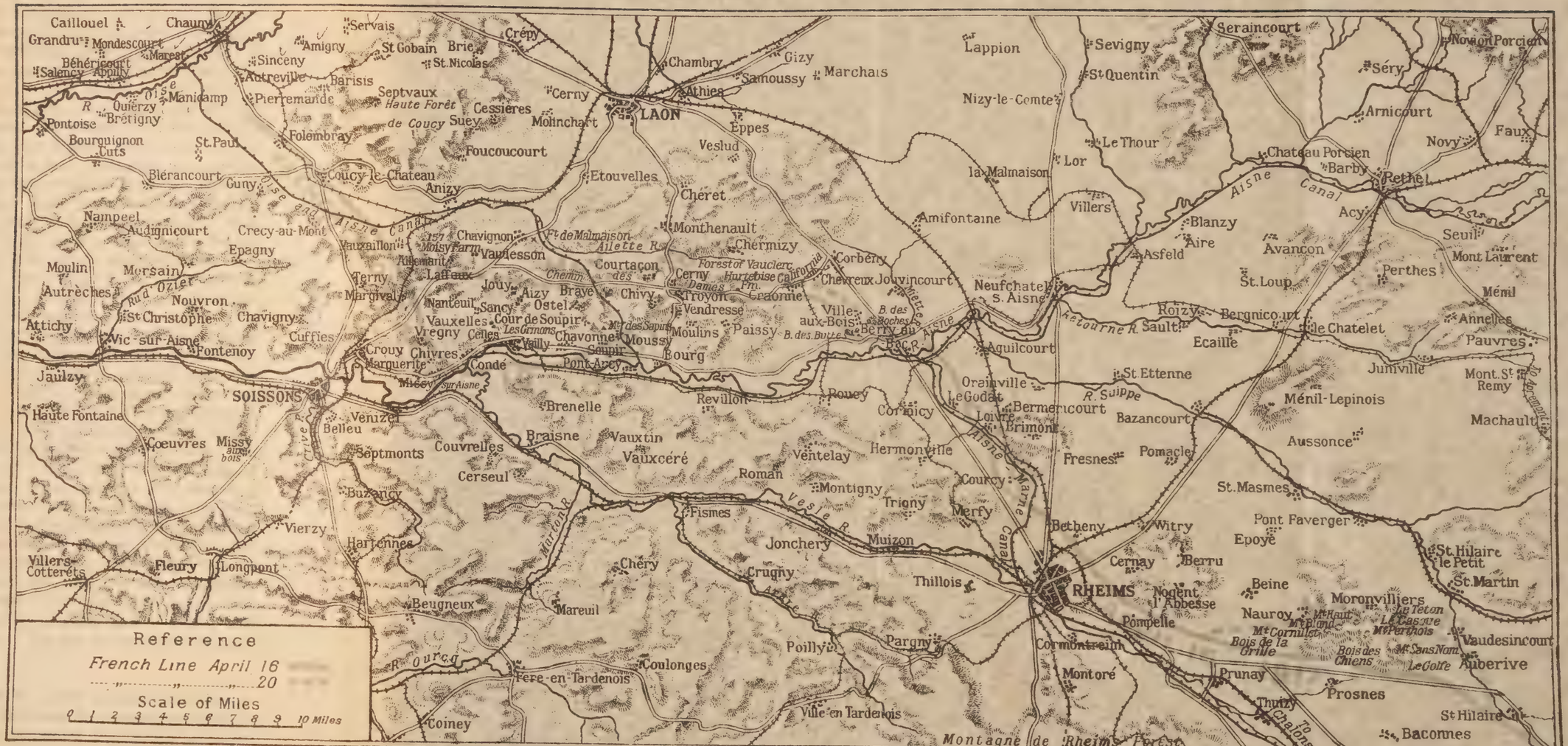
left and left centre was in action. On the left the chief objective was the point of the German salient east of Laffaux, on the Soissons–Laon highroad. The enemy was driven from Hill 157 east of Vauxaillon, and the battle raged around the mill of Laffaux, which stood by the highway. Beyond the mill the ground fell steeply to the ravine which runs to Missy, and in the quarries on the edge of the scarp the Germans had a formidable position. A division of dismounted cuirassiers, supported by tanks, attacked at 4.45 a.m., and by ten o'clock had taken the mill and the trenches to the left of it, and later in the day pushed on to the narrows between the aforementioned ravine and that which runs north to the Ailette by the village of Allemant. Troops climbing up the ridge from Nanteuil-la-Fosse supported the right, and farther east an advance was made along the Fort Condé spur towards its junction with the main ridge. Above Craonne the whole of the California plateau was held except the German work called the " Winterberg " at its western end above the forest of Vauclerc. The position now was that all the Chemin des Dames ridge was in French hands except for some points on its northern edge, the sector for a mile on each side of the fort of Malmaison, and the area around Courtecon.

On Sunday, the 6th, there was severe fighting on the northern scarp between Laffaux Mill and the ravine of Allemant, where for the most part the French retained the positions they had won. More important still, moving out from Craonne, they took the hamlet of Chevreux in the plains, and so safeguarded their hold on the terminal with an advanced post. Already the three days of fighting had given them over 6,000 prisoners, including 150 officers. The following days saw a series of counter-attacks, delivered with fresh " shock troops," after the new German fashion. On the nights of 6th, 7th, 8th, 9th, and 10th May, and during most of the daylight hours of the 9th and 10th, there was bitter fighting all along the ridge, but most notably on the Vauclerc and California plateaux, and at Chevreux in the plains. On the 16th the enemy attacked on a two and a half mile front north of the mill of Laffaux, and two days later he made costly and fruitless efforts at California and north of Braye-en-Laonnois. On the 20th he struck at the French front from Craonne to the fort of Malmaison, but where he got through the barrage he was routed by the infantry, and left 1,000 prisoners behind him.

That day, Sunday, 20th May, saw the culmination of the Moronvillers battle. The task that remained before the French was to round off their scattered gains in the *massif* by forming a line in

THE SECOND BATTLE OF THE AISNE.

(*Facing p. 478.*)



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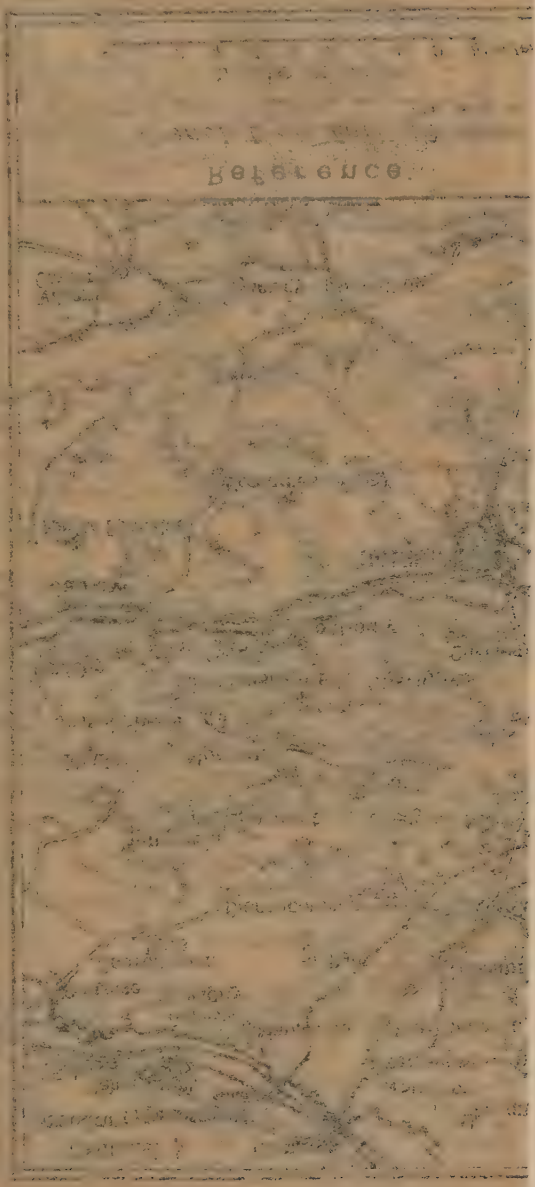
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which they could abide. The sector of attack was the highest ground from Cornillet eastward, for the objectives west of the Thuizy–Nauroy road had been relinquished. Three new divisions were detailed for the task, and at half-past four in the morning, after a mighty artillery bombardment, advanced to the assault. The Germans on Cornillet were ensconced in the strong Flensburg trench just below the summit, in a great tunnel, and on the north slopes behind the crest. Against these was launched the 1st Regiment of Zouaves, the same which had fought under Grossetti on the Yser during the First Battle of Ypres. They raced the 250 steep yards to the summit, under a heavy enfilading fire from the Flensburg trench on their right, gained the crest, and moved down the farther side towards Nauroy. When the entrance to the tunnel was reached, it was discovered that the 600 troops in it were dead, asphyxiated by the blocking of the air-holes and by the French gas shells. The whole summit ridge of the *massif* had now been secured. Since the opening of this section of the battle on 17th April there had been taken 6,120 prisoners, including 120 officers, 52 guns, 42 trench mortars, and 103 machine guns.

The remaining days of May and the month of June saw between the Ailette and the Suippe the usual aftermath of a great action. There were small advances of the French to improve their line, and many violent attacks by picked German troops to recover lost points of vantage. By making a list of such counter-strokes it is possible to master the tactical topography of the battle-ground, and learn which points the enemy considered vital. The chief was the California plateau, the watch-tower over the plain of Laon. This was attacked on 21st, 23rd, and 24th May, and very violently on the night of 2nd June. Another was the cockscomb of the ridge near Hurtebise, another the ground around Cerny, and a third the apex of the western salient between Vauxaillon and Laffaux Mill. In the Moronvillers region the disputed points were all the main summits. The action died away into upland fighting, where tunnels, quarries, and grottoes were the battle-ground, and where the initiative and resolution of companies, platoons, and individuals determined the issue. The day of ambitious strategy had passed.

The Second Battle of the Aisne lasted a little more than a month. It represented, as we have seen, in its main intention a departure from the policy of the Somme, a departure which after the first day or two was not persisted in. It did not achieve the

aim of the French High Command, which was the dislocation of the southern pivot of the Siegfried Line and the envelopment or destruction of that position, and to that extent may be written down a failure. It did not even, as at Arras, gravely endanger any vital enemy centre, and thereby put out of gear his plans for the summer. But it was far from being barren of results. It engaged and destroyed a large number of German divisions; it used up a quantity of the best German "shock-troops"; and it cost the enemy positions which were essential to his comfort, and, ultimately, to his security. Nivelle's reach had been heroic, but it had exceeded his grasp. He suffered beyond doubt from the interference of politicians and the fatigue of his armies; but his essential strategy was unsuited to the place, the hour, and the circumstances of the case. He had a vision of an end without a clear understanding of the means. Only by a succession of miracles could he have succeeded, and miracles, when they happen in war, come singly and not in battalions. He fell into the mistake of endeavouring to reap the fruits of victory before beating the enemy. It was the error of a gifted and generous and courageous spirit, but it was none the less a blunder, for which he paid by a fall from command as sudden as his rise, and which was to bring his country to the very brink of disaster.

For Pétain on his succession to office found a grim problem before him. The battle had been like a chemical which when added to a compound produces an explosion, and the superb *moral* of the soldiers of France seemed to be in the gravest jeopardy. As early as February Nivelle had complained of pacificist and communist propaganda among his troops. There were evil elements in French life which seized the occasion of the fatigue and disillusionment of the soldier to instil the poison of cowardice and treason. The rank and file had many grievances. Leave was hard to get, and when it was granted the *permissionnaire* found such difficulties in reaching his family that most of his scanty time was taken up by the journey. Intense bitterness was roused by letters from home, which told the peasant of the struggle of his womenkind to keep his farm in cultivation; while the workmen of the towns were exempted by thousands for munition making. There was dire confusion in the medical services during the battle, and wounded were sent all over France to spread despondency by the tale of their needless sufferings.

The first signs of revolt appeared about 20th May, not in the troops fighting on the Aisne, but in corps which had been some months

in reserve. The contagion spread to the men in the line, and in certain divisions nearest Paris the mutiny seemed to have something of the character of a first step in political revolution.* The crisis showed Pétain at his best. On the one hand he insisted on reforming flagrant abuses. New regulations were passed granting as a right ten days' leave every four months, with the result that 350,000 French soldiers were on leave at one time, as against 80,000 British. With the help of the American Red Cross, which was now beginning its beneficent work in Europe, the comfort of the fighting man and his dependants was enormously increased. The penal measures used were few; less than a dozen suffered death as mutineers. But Pétain set himself to a great work of education and exhortation. In two months he visited and addressed the officers and men of over one hundred divisions, and created a profound impression. He had no tricks to win popularity, no easy geniality, none of the air of the *bon enfant;* he was always grave and dignified, always the general-in-chief. But such was the atmosphere of calm resolution which he bore with him, such the simplicity and sincerity of his voice and eyes, that he moved audiences which the most finished orations would have left untouched. Honestly and gravely he told them of the peril of their country and the cause for which they and their Allies fought. By the middle of June the danger was past. But one consequence remained, which was to affect the whole strategy of 1917. The armies of France were convalescent, but they had still to be nursed back to perfect health. For the rest of the year it was plain that Britain must bear the chief burden.

* One of the most remarkable facts in the war was the way in which the French mutinies were kept a profound secret both from the enemy and the Allies.

CHAPTER LXXVIII.

MESOPOTAMIA, SYRIA, AND THE BALKANS.

January 9–June 25, 1917.

Maude advances north of Bagdad—Escape of Turkish 13th Corps—Capture of Samara—Falkenhayn sent to Turkey—The First and Second Battles of Gaza—Allenby succeeds Murray—Sarrail's abortive Spring Offensive—King Constantine abdicates, and Venizelos becomes Prime Minister.

(*Maps*, pp. 488, 498, 274.)

I.

BAGDAD had fallen to Sir Stanley Maude on the morning of 11th March. With it he won the southern terminus of the unfinished Bagdad railway, the first section of which had been completed as far north as Samara. He won, too, the ganglion of all the routes of the Mesopotamian plain, where six telegraph lines and six good roads converged, and through which ran the historic highway to Persia that the armies of Darius and Alexander and Harun-al-Rashid had travelled. This highway was now to play a part in the campaign. It ran north-east along the Diala to Khanikin, and then through the lateral valleys of the Median range climbed by Karind and Kermanshah to Hamadan on the Persian plateau. There lay Baratov's small Russian force of one infantry division and Cossack cavalry, which for a year had led a precarious existence some two hundred miles from its base at Kasvin. It will be remembered that in January 1916 Baratov had won Hamadan—the ancient Ecbatana—and, pushing westward, had occupied Kermanshah and Karind, and had flung his patrols into Khanikin itself, 120 miles from Bagdad. But the Turkish capture of Kut put an end to this bold adventure. The Turkish 13th Corps advanced up the Diala, and during the early summer of 1916 drove him back to the Persian tableland, and well to the east of Hamadan. There during the rest of the year he remained, shepherding his difficult transport as well as he might, unable to advance

and equally unable to retire, for the air of Persia was not salubrious for his handful, if once it had to retreat before the Turk. The enemy had posts in the northern mountains at Senna and elsewhere, and since he was secure on the Tigris he could at any moment launch a force for Baratov's destruction. Maude's advance in the beginning of 1917 changed the situation. As soon as he had entered Kut on 24th February the Turkish 13th Corps fell back from Hamadan. They did not attempt to hold the pass of Said Abad in the main Median range, and by the time Bagdad fell they were in Kermanshah, and Baratov's Cossacks were at Bisitun, some twenty miles to the east, where the great rock-sculptures of Darius frown from the mountain side. The reason of this retreat was not far to seek. If Maude, pushing up the Diala, could reach Khanikin first, he would cut off the retreat of the 13th Corps. The Senna detachment was hastening to Kermanshah, and the whole Turkish force was striving against time for Khanikin. It was such a race as was rarely seen in the stagnant modern warfare of positions.

The conquerors of Bagdad, therefore, could not rest on their laurels. Maude had two tasks before him which would not wait. One was to get to Khanikin before the enemy; the second was to harass the retreating 18th Corps in front of him, to prevent it cutting certain important dams on the Tigris and Euphrates, and to drive it north beyond the rail-head at Samara. He had also to make his left flank secure by seizing Feludja, the nearest point on the Euphrates to Bagdad, and so cut the enemy's communications between the upper and the lower river. He therefore divided his forces into four columns. One advanced on each bank of the Tigris, a third struck westward towards Feludja on the Euphrates, forty miles distant, and the fourth followed the Persian road up the Diala valley.

The two lesser tasks were quickly accomplished. The Turks cut the dam above Bagdad as soon as we had entered the city, and the river waters burst into the Akkar Kuf Lake, which overflowed and swamped all the ground up to the *bund* which protected the railway and the western suburbs. But the *bund* held firm, and since the Tigris was exceptionally low there was no serious hindrance to our operations. The Euphrates column entered Feludja on 19th March, just too late to cut off the garrisons of the middle valley on their northward retreat. It harassed their rear-guards, and drove them twenty-five miles upstream to their prepared position at Ramadie.

On the same date Maude issued a proclamation to the Bagdad *vilayet*, perhaps the most skilful of the many proclamations issued by British generals to Eastern peoples. It deserves quotation :—

" 1. In the name of my King, and in the name of the peoples over whom he rules, I address you as follows :—

" 2. Our military operations have as their object the defeat of the enemy, and the driving of him from these territories. In order to complete this task, I am charged with absolute and supreme control of all regions in which British troops operate ; but our armies do not come into your cities and lands as conquerors or enemies, but as liberators.

" 3. Since the days of Halaka your city and your lands have been subject to the tyranny of strangers, your palaces have fallen into ruins, your gardens have sunk in desolation, and your forefathers and yourselves have groaned in bondage. Your sons have been carried off to wars not of your seeking, your wealth has been stripped from you by unjust men and squandered in distant places.

" 4. Since the days of Midhat, the Turks have talked of reforms, yet do not the ruins and wastes of to-day testify the vanity of those promises ?

" 5. It is the wish not only of my King and his peoples, but it is also the wish of the great nations with whom he is in alliance, that you should prosper even as in the past, when your lands were fertile, when your ancestors gave to the world literature, science, and art, and when Bagdad city was one of the wonders of the world.

" 6. Between your people and the dominions of my King there has been a close bond of interest. For two hundred years have the merchants of Bagdad and Great Britain traded together in mutual profit and friendship. On the other hand, the Germans and Turks, who have despoiled you and yours, have for twenty years made Bagdad a centre of power from which to assail the power of the British and the Allies of the British in Persia and Arabia. Therefore the British Government cannot remain indifferent as to what takes place in your country now or in the future, for in duty to the interests of the British people and their Allies, the British Government cannot risk that being done in Bagdad again which has been done by the Turks and Germans during the war.

" 7. But you people of Bagdad, whose commercial prosperity and whose safety from oppression and invasion must ever be a matter of the closest concern to the British Government, are not to understand that it is the wish of the British Government to impose upon you alien institutions. It is the hope of the British Government that the aspirations of your philosophers and writers shall be realized, and that once again the people of Bagdad shall flourish, enjoying their wealth and substance under institutions which are in consonance with their sacred laws and their racial ideals. In Hedjaz the Arabs have expelled the

Turks and Germans who oppressed them and proclaimed the Sherif Hussein as their King, and his Lordship rules in independence and freedom, and is the ally of the nations who are fighting against the power of Turkey and Germany; so, indeed, are the noble Arabs, the Lords of Koweit, Nejd, and Asir.

"8. Many noble Arabs have perished in the cause of Arab freedom, at the hands of those alien rulers, the Turks, who oppressed them. It is the determination of the Government of Great Britain and the great Powers allied to Great Britain that these noble Arabs shall not have suffered in vain. It is the hope and desire of the British people and the nations in alliance with them that the Arab race may rise once more to greatness and renown among the peoples of the earth, and that it shall bind itself together to this end in unity and concord.

"9. O people of Bagdad, remember that for twenty-six generations you have suffered under strange tyrants who have ever endeavoured to set one Arab house against another in order that they might profit by your dissensions. This policy is abhorrent to Great Britain and her Allies, for there can be neither peace nor prosperity where there is enmity and misgovernment. Therefore I am commanded to invite you, through your nobles and elders and representatives, to participate in the management of your civil affairs in collaboration with the political representatives of Great Britain who accompany the British Army, so that you may be united with your kinsmen in North, East, South, and West in realizing the aspirations of your race."

On the 13th the western Tigris column moved out of Bagdad, and on the 14th, in scorching weather and after stubborn fighting, took the ridge called the Sugar Loaf Hill and the station of Mushaidie, and cleared the right bank of the river up to that point. The fighting lasted into the early morning of the 15th, by which time the remnants of the three enemy divisions were in full retreat towards Samara. By the morning of the 16th they were some forty miles north of Bagdad. But the advance on the western bank could not be pressed so long as the eastern bank remained uncleared, for the other divisions of the 18th Corps were concentrating there, and a fresh division had arrived from Mosul.

For the moment, however, the main interest lay in the race against time with the Turkish 13th Corps in the mountains. On the 15th Maude's eastern column left Bagdad, and on the night of the 17th crossed the Diala, which in its upper valley bends westward towards the Tigris, and took the villages of Bahriz and Bakuba. Bahriz was the western end of a difficult mountain path from Harunabad, on the Persian trunk road, by Mendeli, and our position there prevented its use by the retreating 13th Corps. By this time Baratov was in Kermanshah, and the Senna force was

cut off from its normal line of retreat, and compelled to attempt the tracks of the mountain between it and the upper Diala, leaving its guns behind it. The situation seemed a desperate one, but the Turkish commander revealed surprising qualities of leadership and strategy. West of Karind lies the pass of Piatak, on the ridge which separates the streams which flow to the Karun basin from the Alwand torrent which joins the Diala. There, in an admirable position for defence, he left a strong rearguard, which succeeded in checking Baratov's weak forces. Against the British Khalil took up a position on the ridge called Jebel Hamrin, which cuts the Diala at right angles near Mansuriya, some thirty miles north-east of Bakuba. These two screens were intended to hold up the pursuit until the 13th Corps reached Khanikin, crossed the Diala near the mouth of the Alwand, and took the road which runs by Kara Tepe, Kifri, and Kirkuk towards Mosul.

On 23rd March Maude was in Shahraban, and close on the Jebel Hamrin position. His advance had been slow and difficult owing to the number of canals and little rivers that had to be bridged. Seventy miles off was Baratov, struggling in snowdrifts against the Piatak Pass, while the British were sweltering in the torrid plains. Between the two was the Turkish 13th Corps, rapidly approaching the Diala and safety. On the 25th Maude attacked the screen at Jebel Hamrin, his right moving along the highway towards Kizil Robat, and the cavalry on the left attacking the defile of Deli Abbas on the right bank of the Diala. Meantime the column operating on the eastern bank of the Tigris had occupied Deltawa and Sindia, thirty-five miles north of Bagdad, where the Diala and Tigris are only nine miles apart. There they were facing the larger part of the 18th Corps.

By the last days of March the Turkish 13th Corps had escaped from the trap. On the 31st Maude carried the Deli Abbas position, and on the same day Baratov was over the Piatak Pass, and some ten miles farther west at Siripul. The enemy screens were being withdrawn, for there was no further need of them. When we passed beyond the barrier of the Jebel Hamrin hills we could see on the far side of the Diala the last Turkish rearguards moving on the western plain by Kara Tepe. The enemy had carried out his plan with complete precision and success, and his opponents were not slow to acclaim his achievement.

On the 29th the eastern Tigris column had forced the 18th Corps back and crossed the marshy channel of the river Adhaim. We were now on the left bank of the Tigris, within thirty miles of

Samara, on the ground where Julian the Apostate had received his death-wound. But the situation had changed. The 18th and 13th Corps were now united, and able to take the offensive. Baratov was in Khanikin, and on 2nd April his Cossack advance guards joined hands with the British at Kizil Robat. About 7th April the Turkish counter-offensive developed. The 13th Corps, instead of making for Kifri, swung south, held the left bank of the Shatt-el-Adhaim, in conjunction with the 52nd Division of the 18th Corps, and came in touch with the British cavalry on the line Garfa–Deli Abbas. Maude promptly retired his advanced posts on the right bank of the Diala, and fell slowly southwards towards Deltawa, while his cavalry held the enemy. On the night of 10th April the eastern Tigris column marched eastward, and on the morning of the 11th had taken the Turks in flank. The battle began in a mirage which, while it lasted, made air reconnaissance impossible. It lifted towards midday, and before evening the enemy were in retreat, leaving behind them 700 wounded prisoners. The fighting lasted till the 13th, by which date the 13th Corps was forced back again on the Jebel Hamrin range.

Meantime the western Tigris column had been making good progress along the railway, and on the 16th captured the ridge in front of the Turkish position which covered Istabulat station. The time had now come for the final advance on Samara. On the night of the 17th Maude's right wing recrossed the Shatt-el-Adhaim. Next day it engaged and destroyed the Turkish forces which held the right bank of the stream. The action was fought on a day of intense heat, and at a cost of seventy-three casualties we took over 1,200 prisoners, including twenty-seven officers. On the 21st the left wing attacked Istabulat, and drove in the enemy. Pressing on, they came in touch on the 22nd with the final Turkish position, some six miles nearer Samara. By daylight on the 23rd the line was carried, and that morning we took Samara station, capturing sixteen locomotives, 240 railway trucks, and two barges laden with munitions. Next day we entered Samara town. In the operations of the preceding three days we had taken some 700 prisoners, five guns, and large quantities of rifles.

Khalil made one last attempt at a counter-stroke. The two British columns on the Tigris had now joined hands, and the Turkish 18th Corps was scattered some fifteen miles north of Samara, where it was feverishly entrenching. But the 13th Corps still hung on our right flank, and on 24th April it emerged from the

Jebel Hamrin hills. That day it was heavily beaten, and driven up the Shatt-el-Adhaim. We struck again on the 30th against the position which it held twenty-five miles south-west of Kifri, at the defile where the Adhaim issues from the hills. The attack, delivered in a furious dust-storm, was a surprise, and carried all the enemy lines of entrenchments. Once more he was forced to flee, with our cavalry at his heels.

The end of April found Bagdad secure. The 13th Corps, after its brilliant escape from Kermanshah, had been three times engaged and beaten, and was now forced into the Jebel Hamrin fastnesses. The 18th Corps had fallen back on Tekrit, having been five times defeated during the month of April alone. In every direction the enemy had been forced at least eighty miles from the city; moreover, his two corps had been driven back on divergent lines. The terminal section of the Bagdad railway was in our hands. Our casualties had been slight, and our transport and hospital arrangements were now so good that the Army of Mesopotamia, once the worst cared for of British forces, was now almost the best. Sir Stanley Maude, now that the summer heat was upon him, could call a halt with an easy mind. The original plan of operations for the spring of 1917 had given the *beau rôle* to the Russians—an advance from Persia upon Mosul and Bagdad; but the disorganization of revolutionary Russia had made the great projected westward and southward drive impossible. The heavy end had, therefore, fallen upon the British commander, and he had performed his task with consummate judgment and skill. He had blocked the communications of the enemy with southern Persia, and, therefore, with the Indian border.

After their victory of Kut the Turkish General Staff had been flown with pride, and their German colleagues found them hard to deal with. The loss of Bagdad deflated their arrogance, and Enver begged of Germany a group headquarters and a corps for the recapture of the city. In January 1917 the Amanus standard-gauge tunnel had been completed, and the narrow-gauge Taurus tunnel would be ready by the autumn. Germany assented; Falkenhayn was placed in command of a group, and the German "Asia Corps" was formed—a corps which the Turks called *Yilderim* or "Lightning," the name their great-grandfathers had bestowed upon Napoleon. This force was primarily destined for Mesopotamia, but its fortunes, as we shall see, were to be linked with another terrain. Meantime the accession of strength to the Turk was being balanced by an Allied reinforcement in a different quarter.

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OPERATIONS NORTH OF BAGDAD.

(*Facing p. 488.*)

Operations North of Kut

The King of the Hedjaz, as we have seen, held Mecca, but a Turkish garrison was in Medina, supplied by the Hedjaz railway. That garrison, strongly reinforced, attempted the recapture of Mecca, and since the only obstacle was Arab irregulars it looked for a little as if it might succeed. In January, however, an Arab force under Sherif Feisul, the king's eldest son, marched two hundred miles north to Wejh, supported along the coast by the British Red Sea Flotilla. This threat to the enemy flank worked like a charm: the Turks gave up all thoughts of Mecca, and distributed their troops for the defence of Medina and the railway. The incident revealed to the Arab tribes their true policy. Inspired and led by a young English archæologist, afterwards famous as Colonel T. E. Lawrence, they entered upon a bold campaign, not against the Turkish army but against its *matériel*. Bridges, railways, guns, dumps, depots, were their quarry. Bands, mounted on camels and carrying six weeks' food, raided the line at incredible distances from their base, and immobilized the Turkish forces in the Hedjaz. Colonel Lawrence made out of irregular war not only a gallant adventure but an exact science.

II.

The fall of Rafa on 9th January had brought Sir Archibald Murray to the eastern borders of Egypt. The desert railway was being pushed along the coast to form a British line of communication similar to that which the enemy possessed in his military railway from Beersheba. At first it was thought that the Turks would make their next stand close to the frontier. On 28th February our mounted patrols took the village of Khan Yunus, and preparations were made for an attack in force upon the Weli Sheikh Nuran position, at which the enemy had been working hard since Christmas. But on 5th March our aircraft reported that the two enemy divisions in front of us were falling back. A vigorous pursuit was impossible, for the railhead was still too far in the rear, and the enemy unhindered took up ground on the line from Gaza to Tel el Sheria and Beersheba, this last point being strongly entrenched to protect his left.

The German general, Kress von Kressenstein, now in actual command of the Turkish forces, was a brave and competent soldier, who had to contend with immense difficulties. The people of Turkey were heartily sick of the war. Starvation and pestilence

had raged throughout the land, and Syria had not suffered least. The Lebanon and even Damascus were depopulated by famine. Supplies of all kinds for the troops were hopelessly in arrear. Men came unwillingly to arms, and desertion became an epidemic. One division which left Constantinople at full strength lost 3,000 deserters on the road. A regiment reached Mesopotamia with the loss of 500 deserters out of a total of 1,300 men. In the previous October, out of 2,000 sent as reinforcements from Constantinople to Aleppo, only 966 arrived at their destination. In such conditions it was hard to make a plan of campaign. Above all, he had above him, as Commander-in-Chief of the Army of Syria, Djemal, nominally Minister of Marine, whose moods were as shifting as the desert sands. Djemal had quarrelled with all his colleagues of the Committee, he had quarrelled furiously with Kressenstein, and only his fanatical hatred of Britain kept him from exchanging his uneasy Syrian satrapy for the more congenial paths of intrigue at Constantinople.

The land from the Wadi el Arish—the ancient "River of Egypt"—to the Philistian plain had for twenty-six hundred years been a cockpit of war. Sometimes a conqueror from the north like Nebuchadnezzar, or from the south like Ali Bey, Napoleon, and Mehemet Ali, met the enemy in Egypt or Syria, but more often the decisive fight was fought in the gates. Ascalon, Gaza, Rafa, El Arish, are all names famous in history. Up and down the strip of seaward levels marched the great armies of Egypt and Assyria, while the Jews looked fearfully on from their barren hills. In the Philistian plain Sennacherib smote the Egyptian hosts in the days of King Hezekiah, only to see his army melt away under the stroke of the "angel of the Lord." At Rafa Esarhaddon defeated Pharaoh, and added Egypt and Ethiopia to his kingdoms. There, too, the Scythian hordes were bought off by Psammetichus. At Megiddo, or Armageddon, Josiah was vanquished by Pharaoh Necho, who in turn was routed by Nebuchadnezzar. The first Ptolemy was beaten at Gaza by the young Demetrius, and a century later Ptolemy the Fourth shattered the Seleucid army at Rafa. Twenty years after came the famous siege of Gaza by Antiochus the Third. Then the land had rest till, in A.D. 614, the last great Sassanid, Chosroes II., swept down upon Egypt. In 1072 the invasion of the Seljuk Turcomans was stayed in Philistia. Godfrey of Bouillon, the Crusading king of Jerusalem, defeated the Egyptians at Ascalon; and a century and a half later that town, long a Frankish stronghold, fell to the Mameluke Sultan after the

Battle of Gaza. In this gate of ancient feuds it now fell to Turkey's lot to speak with her enemy.

It was clear that Murray must fight a pitched battle before he could advance. He had now left the Sinai desert for the stony hills of Judah, which lie between the south end of the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean, and rise in the north-east corner to the noble mass of Hebron. In front of the enemy's position ran in a broad curve from south-east to north-west the dry watercourse called the Wadi Ghuzze. It was desirable to engage him as soon as possible, lest he should fall back upon more favourable lines farther north. Our railhead was still far behind, for it only reached Rafa in the middle of March ; and if a blow was to be struck soon it would be necessary to push forward the British force " to its full radius of action into a country bare of all supplies and almost devoid of water." There were two possible plans of campaign. One was to strike at Beersheba, and so reach the Central Palestine railway. The drawback of such a course was that it would have brought the British line of communications from Rafa parallel to the enemy's front, and given him an easy target for a counter-stroke. The other and apparently the safer plan was to move up the coast with Gaza as the objective, aiming at the Turkish right flank. Such an advance would have its left covered by the sea, it would be better supplied with water, and the railway following it would be easier to build among the flats of the Philistian plain than among the rocks and ridges of the Judæan hills. Sir Archibald Murray accordingly decided upon the latter course. On 20th March Sir Charles Dobell, commanding the Eastern Force, moved his headquarters from El Arish to Rafa, and Sir Philip Chetwode, commanding the Desert Column,* joined him there. Chetwode's cavalry was now at the little village of Deir el Belah, south-west of the Wadi Ghuzze, and the 52nd and 54th Infantry Divisions and the Camel Corps were disposed on its right south of the watercourse. By the evening of the 25th all was in train for the coming battle. The sun set in a sky of rose and gold, and there was a wonderful night of stars, but those familiar with that coast sniffed in the air the coming of a sea fog.

The British plan of battle was this. The enemy's front was not a continuous line of trenches. Most of the troops were well to the north-east of Gaza, but he had a considerable garrison in that

* The Desert Column comprised at this time the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division (Major-General Chauvel), the Imperial Mounted Division, and the 53rd Infantry Division.

town, and posts echeloned to the south-east as far as Beersheba. The cavalry of the Desert Column were to advance early in the morning and occupy the country east and north of the town to prevent Turkish reinforcements arriving from that quarter and to cut off the enemy's retreat. The 53rd Division from the Desert Column was to follow the cavalry for a little, and then to attack Gaza in front. The 54th Division was to move on its right rear and hold the Sheikh Abbas height, in case of an attack from the east or south-east. One brigade of this division was to assemble a little to the westward to be ready at short notice to support the Desert Column. The 52nd Division was held in general reserve. Murray's objects were these: to seize the line of the Wadi Ghuzze, and so cover the advance of the railway; to compel the enemy to fight; and by a surprise stroke to capture Gaza and cut off its garrison. The main intention, it is clear, was less the occupation of the town than the capture of the 7,000 Turks who held it. It was in essence a raid on the largest possible scale. Consequently it was an operation in which time was all-important.

The cavalry scrambled down the forty-foot sides of the Wadi Ghuzze, and ploughed through its sandy bottom at 2.30 a.m., while the night was yet dark. But no sooner had the sun risen than a dense sea fog rolled over the countryside. No landmark was visible, and the troops had to grope their way forward by compass-bearings. This delay was the crucial event of the morning, for it upset the time-table of operations, and deprived what was a race against time—for there was no water—of two priceless hours of daylight. The Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division in front, having crossed the Wadi by 6.15 a.m., rode for Beit Durdis due east of Gaza, which it reached at 9.30. The Imperial Mounted Division at the same hour arrived at El Mendur. Presently the former division, pushing out detachments from Beit Durdis, had completely outflanked Gaza on the north and east, and rested its right on the sea. The 2nd Australian Light Horse took prisoner the general commanding the 53rd Turkish Division, and destroyed with machine-gun fire the head of a Turkish column debouching from Gaza towards the north-east. The Imperial Mounted Division sent out patrols towards Huj and Hereira and the railway at Tel el Sheria, two squadrons of a Yeomanry brigade were astride the Beersheba–Gaza road, and a squadron attempted to gain touch with the Australian and New Zealand Division. This mounted screen was all day heavily engaged, for it had to contend with the

enemy reinforcements arriving from north, east, and south-east, and was under the fire of the heavy guns at Hereira.

Meantime the 53rd Division—Welsh Territorials—had crossed the Wadi Ghuzze for the frontal attack. Their right was directed on the Mansura ridge and their left on El Sheluf, while the Yeomanry protected their flank towards the sea. These positions were reached by 10 a.m., the guns had been brought up, and the artillery "preparation" begun. The fog had gone by eight o'clock, and the British infantry on the ridge could look across the two miles of yellow sand-dunes to the white red-roofed houses of the little town, the green of its lemon groves, and the minarets of the mosque which was once the Templars' Church of St. John. On the right in front of them was the hillock called Ali Muntar, up which Samson carried the gates of Gaza. Beyond were the ridges and open spaces where the cavalry were now engaged, and from the far base of the Judæan hills rose the dust clouds which told of Turkish troops hurrying to the battle-ground. The 54th Division—Territorials from the eastern counties of England—was instructed to protect the right rear of the 53rd against this threatened assault, and took up position duly on the Sheikh Abbas ridge, five miles S.S.E. of the town. One brigade from this division went to Mansura to support the attacking troops. The 53rd, deployed on the line El Sheluf–Mansura, advanced against the Ali Muntar position. This was a perfect honeycomb of trenches, and so was the hill to the north-east separated from it by a low saddle of sand-dunes. The three brigades went into action about noon, over ground devoid of cover and under the hot sun of a Syrian spring. At one o'clock they were close on their objectives, but the Turkish shrapnel and machine-gun fire were woefully thinning their ranks.

At that hour Sir Philip Chetwode resolved to fling the whole of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division against the town itself to support the attack of the 53rd, and to bring the Imperial Mounted Division and the cavalry farther north to act as a screen against those enemy reinforcements from the railway which were now observed to be coming up fast. By 3.30 General Chauvel was ready to attack, the 2nd Australian Horse on the north, with its right flank on the sea, the New Zealand Mounted Rifles in the centre, and the Yeomanry on the left, adjoining the main infantry battle. By 4.30 the 53rd Division had carried most of Ali Muntar, and was closing in on Gaza from the south, while the Australasian horsemen were in the eastern streets. At this moment a brigade of the 54th Division arrived, with orders to

take the remnant of the position. The Territorials after a gallant struggle succeeded, and pushed on nearly a mile beyond the crest. Meantime the Australasians were fighting their way through the cactus hedges on the skirts of Gaza, and the 3rd Australian Light Horse were fending off enemy attacks to the east. In that direction the enemy was held, and in another hour the town would have been in our hands. But the sea fog had done its work, and the morning's delay had ruined our chances of success. For the darkness descended before we had won the last ground, and in war a task unfinished is often like a task not begun.

The British position was far from satisfactory. To quote Sir Archibald Murray's words: "Gaza was enveloped, and the enemy, in addition to heavy losses in killed and wounded, had lost 700 prisoners. The 53rd Division was occupying the Ali Muntar position, which it had captured, but its right flank was very much in the air, only a thin line of cavalry holding off the relief columns of continually increasing strength which were approaching from north and east. In support of this division the 54th Division, less one brigade, was holding Sheikh Abbas, with its left about two and a half miles from the flank of the 53rd. The Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division were very much extended round Gaza, and were engaged in street fighting. The Imperial Mounted Division and the Imperial Camel Corps, on a very wide front, were endeavouring to hold off enemy forces." It was a fantastic situation in which Dobell's army now found itself, and it was made perilous by the arrival of strong enemy reinforcements from north, east, and south-east. Moreover the mounted troops had been unable to water their horses during the day, and unless Gaza was taken there was no water on that side the Wadi Ghuzze.

Dobell had still the 52nd Division in reserve, which he might have used to support the 53rd, and enable it to join up with the 54th. But the night was falling, and it seemed to him, probably with justice, too wild a gambler's throw. He accordingly resolved to withdraw. Chauvel was ordered to break off the engagement and retire his two mounted divisions west of the Wadi Ghuzze. This would make the position of the 53rd Division impossible, so it was instructed to draw in its right, and find touch with the 54th Division, now falling back from Sheikh Abbas to a ridge south-west of Mansura. The retirement, considering the difficulties, was brilliantly accomplished, though some of the Australian Light Horse, coming round the east side of Gaza, had a sharp brush with the enemy. The New Zealanders managed to bring back with

them a battery of enemy guns which they had taken earlier in the day.

At daybreak on the morning of the 27th the British line north of the Wadi Ghuzze ran in a sharp salient along the El Sire and El Burjalije ridges—the 53rd Division on the left and the 54th on the right, with Yeomanry guarding the left flank next the sea, and the Camel Corps between the right flank and the wadi. Meantime the enemy had taken advantage of our withdrawal to reinforce strongly the Gaza garrison. The chance of a British advance had gone, but nevertheless patrols from two brigades pushed forward and occupied our positions of the day before on Ali Muntar Hill. Supports were about to be sent forward to these outposts, when Kressenstein launched his counter-attack from the north and north-east. It at once drove in our patrols on Ali Muntar, and was then checked by our artillery barrage. But it was necessary to withdraw the apex of the salient, which was the point of junction of our two infantry divisions. Meantime another Turkish force had reached the Sheikh Abbas ridge, and shelled our rear south of Mansura. The 53rd and 54th Divisions clung gallantly all day to their ground, and the Camel Corps on their right repelled with great slaughter an attack by the 3rd Turkish Cavalry Division. But our situation was a bad one, exposed and waterless, and, since we were far from railhead and the horses were tired, a rapid reorganization for a new advance was out of the question. Dobell, therefore, ordered a retirement, and during the night the infantry and cavalry joined the mounted troops on the other side of the Wadi Ghuzze, where they took up a strong position covering Deir el Belah. Of the three contemplated objectives two had more or less been gained. We dominated the seaward end of the Wadi Ghuzze. We had forced the enemy to give battle. We had taken 950 Turkish and German prisoners and two Austrian field guns, and—at the expense of under 4,000 casualties, most of them only slightly wounded—had caused some 8,000 enemy losses. But we had wholly failed to take Gaza, and this may fairly be attributed to the fog and the consequent delay, rather than to any blunder in the plan or lack of resolution in the troops. "The troops engaged," said the official dispatch, "both cavalry, camelry, and infantry, especially the 53rd Division and the brigade of the 54th, which had not been seriously in action since the evacuation of Suvla Bay at the end of 1915, fought with the utmost gallantry and endurance, and showed to the full the splendid fighting qualities which they possess."

Three weeks intervened between the first and second battles of Gaza. In the meantime the railway had been brought forward to Deir el Belah, and cisterns had been fixed in the Wadi Ghuzze, to which water brought by rail was pumped over the In Seirat range. The Gaza position was now very different from what it had been on the 26th of March. Then the long straggling line of posts towards Beersheba had been held by two Turkish divisions; now we had five infantry divisions against us, at least a division of cavalry, and twice the number of heavy batteries. The inner defences of the town—the Ali Muntar ridge—had been enormously strengthened. There was a strong line of outer defences from the sea to Sheikh Abbas, and on the eastern flank a new trench system 12,000 yards long had been constructed from Gaza south-east to the Atawineh ridge. An immense amount of wiring had been done, and the change in the situation was roughly the change in the Gallipoli position between the first and second battles of Krithia. There was no longer any possibility of a surprise. There was no chance, owing to the flank defences, of an encircling movement by the cavalry. The only tactics were those of a frontal assault, undertaken without superior numbers, and with all the disadvantages of lengthy communications. The explanation of a policy so unpromising was that it was pressed on Murray by the home Government. The British War Cabinet, unconvinced by the lesson of Kut, underrated the need of complete preparation in Eastern campaigning. They considered it desirable on political grounds to make some advance in Palestine to synchronize with the great French and British offensives on the Western front, and believed that the enemy, shaken by the action of 26th–27th March, would yield to the cumulative pressure of a second blow. The alternative plan of turning Gaza by way of Beersheba was impossible at the moment, since all the British preparations had been directed towards the coast route. In such desert warfare, where the mobility of troops is limited by the position of railhead, it is impossible in a week or two to change a strategical plan.

The British scheme was a frontal attack in two stages. The first stage was designed to carry the outer defences from the sea to Sheikh Abbas, and the second to break through the Ali Muntar position and take Gaza. In the first stage the dispositions were these. On the left the 53rd Division was to stand north of the Wadi Ghuzze and carry out strong reconnaissances along the coast. On its right the 52nd Division was to advance against the ridge running south-westward from Ali Muntar, which contained

the formidable defences known as the Warren, the Labyrinth, Green Hill, Middlesex Hill, Outpost Hill, and Lees Hill. On its right the 54th Division was to attack the line Mansura–Sheikh Abbas. Its right flank was protected by a mounted division of the Desert Column, while the other mounted division was placed at Shellal, to watch enemy movements in the direction of Hereira. The 74th Division—dismounted yeomanry, most of whom had been in Gallipoli—was in general reserve. The country, it should be remembered, was notably adapted for defence—sand-dunes, criss-cross ridges, and endless natural redoubts for machine guns.

The attack began at dawn on 17th April under a sky which promised a day of burning sun. The first stage was a brilliant success. With the assistance of tanks the outer defence line—Sheikh Abbas–Mansura–Kurd Hill—was taken by 7 a.m. with few casualties. The cavalry on the right did good service, and dislodged bodies of Turkish horse from pockets of the nullahs between El Mendur and Hereira. During the 18th the ground won was secured, and preparations were completed for the final effort on the 19th. It was now the duty of the 53rd Division to push north along the shore against the half-moon of trenches south-west of Gaza, its first objective being the line Sheikh Ajlin–Samson Ridge. The 52nd Division was to carry the long ridge running south-east from Ali Muntar. The 54th Division was directed against Ali Muntar itself and the enemy's position at Khirbet Sihan, with the Camel Corps to help it. The 74th Division was to be held in readiness behind the Sheikh Abbas and Mansura ridges. The Imperial Mounted Division was to attack El Atawineh dismounted, and the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division to protect their right. The task of the Desert Column was strictly a " containing " attack, the struggle for the main objectives being left to the 52nd and 54th Divisions.

The cavalry started at dawn, and so far as the mounted part was concerned, succeeded in gaining its objectives. The dismounted Imperial Division found themselves held, however, by the Atawineh trenches. The " preparation " for the infantry began at 5.30 a.m., and was assisted from the sea by the guns of the French man-of-war *Requin* and two British monitors. In the hot, windless dawn the bombardment was a strange spectacle. " As the sun lifted over the black hills of Judæa, from sea and land shells of all calibres up to 11-inch tore slits in the elaborate defences, throwing up masses of earth and wire, and making Ali Muntar quake. Some trees on that hill were entirely denuded of their leaves, but the most

prominent tree of all seemed to bend before the shell-storm and retain most of its clothing. . . . On the dunes pillars of sand were raised, framed with the white and black smoke of the explosives, a wonderful foil to the glittering golden ridges."

The 53rd Division attacked at 7.15, and the rest of the line at 7.30. The 53rd took Samson Ridge, and early in the afternoon attained its first objective. The 52nd—Territorials from the Scottish Lowlands, who had won fame at Gallipoli and in the earlier Sinai campaign—had a harder task. They were attacking the strong ridge running south-west from Ali Muntar, and though they took Lees Hill, its first point, by 8.15 a.m., they were checked on its second feature, Outpost Hill. The 54th could make little headway against Ali Muntar, owing to the fact that its left was in the air, but its right brigade and the camelry managed to enter the enemy trenches at Khirbet Sihan. In the afternoon a heavy counter-attack forced the whole division a little back, as well as the 3rd and 4th Australian Light Horse on its right; but the attack was stayed by the gallantry and stamina of the Camel Corps, who held a critical point till a Yeomanry brigade came up in support. In the same way the 52nd Division was forced off Outpost Hill; a handful of men retook the place; but the Lowlanders found themselves unable to advance farther, and unless they could advance the left of the 54th Division would be seriously enfiladed. The difficulty was that the configuration of the ground made it hard to send reinforcements to the 52nd, since the attack in that section must be made on a very narrow front. At 6.20 in the evening we were forced off Outpost Hill, and the position at nightfall was that, while the 53rd Division held the line Sheikh Ajlin–Samson Ridge, the 52nd and 54th Divisions had made little headway, and we had lost some 7,000 men.

Sir Archibald Murray, before the battle was broken off, had issued an order that all ground gained must be held during the night with the object of resuming the attack on Ali Muntar at dawn. To this order Dobell not unnaturally demurred. The troops had lost heavily, they were wearied out by the dust and heat of a torrid day, the water supply was difficult, and the strength of the Turkish position was now fully revealed. Chetwode agreed with this view, and Murray allowed himself to be persuaded. If the frontal attack was to be persisted in, reinforcements must be awaited; if some new plan were adopted, there must be certain adjustments of communications to support it. Accordingly the British front remained as it had been on the night of the 19th.

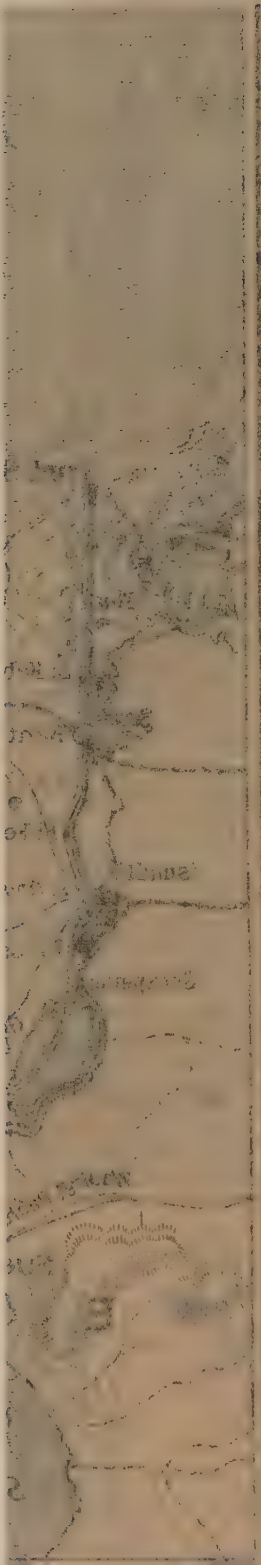
MEDITERRANEAN SEA

Jaffa
Wadi Surar
Ramleh
Lod
Valley of Ajalon
Mtns. of Ephraim
Berfilya
El Burj
Betunia
Bireh
El Kubeibah
El Mughar
Abu Shushel (Gezer)
Jericho
River Jordan
Katra
Nebi Samwil
Kuryat el Enab
Saris
JERUSALEM
Esdud
El Kustineh
Tel-es-Safi
Sharafat
Sur Bahir
Gomorrah
Hamameh
Beit Jala
Bethlehem
Ascalon
Wilderness of Tekoa
El Faluja
Beit Jibrin
Wilderness of Jeriel
Beit Hanun
Gaza
Beit Durdis
El Khuli (Hebron)
Shelkh Ajlin
Deir el Belah
El Mendur
Tel-el-Sheria
Hereira
Khan Yunus
Rafa
Well Sheikh Nuran
Shellal
Beersheba
Scale of Miles
0 5 10 15 20

Beirut
Zahleh
Rayak
Saida
Damascus
R. Abana
Mt Hermon
R. Pharpar
Nahr Kasimya
Es Sur (Tyre)
Akka
Bay of Akka
Haifa
Capernaum
Bethsaida
Nawa
Ezra
Magdala
Sea of Galilee
Tiberias
Ghazale
Nazareth
Mezerib
Mt Tabor
Sharat el Mendhire
Plain of Esdraelon
El Afuleh
Jisr el Mujamia
Irbid
Deraa
W. es Zeidi
El Lejjon (Megiddo)
Er Remte
Busrah
Caesarea
El Marah
Beisan
Sharon
Arar
Bakka
Jeb
Jelaimeh
Tubas
Jebel Ajlun
Tul Keram
Messudie
Samaria
Arsuf
Bir Adas
Mt Ebal
Nablus (Shechem)
Mafrak
R. Jabbok
Jisr ed Damieh
Jerash
Jiljulieh (Gilgal)
Rafat
Es Salt
Zerhha
Jaffa
Mtns. of Ephraim
Bireh
Amman
Lod
Yebna
Jericho (Erina)
Wadi Nimrin
El Kubeibeh
Kural el Enab
Saris
Kustul
Esdud
JERUSALEM
Sur Bahir
Elkustineh
Hamamen
BETHLEHEM
Ascalon
Beit Jibrin
Judean Hills
Plain
Deir Sneid
El Khulil
Khan-ez-Zebib
Gaza
Beit Hanun
Huj
Mt Hebron
W. el Hasasina
W. el Modjib
Deir-el-Belah
Mendur
Tel el Sheria
Khan Yunus
Philistian
Hereira
Rafa
Rabba
Beersheba
Well Sheikh Nuran
Shellal
Port Said
Bay of Tinah
Baroawil Peninsula
Suez Canal
Massid
Sheikh Zuweiyid
Kerak
El Matarma
El Arish
Khalasa
Tina
Rubeiba
Kornub
Asluj
Wadi Hareidhin
Wadi Kerak
Romani
Bir el Abd
Bir Lahfan
Bir el Mazar
Turkish Military Ry
El Kab
Katia
Bir en Nuss
Duweidar
Magdhaba
Tefile
Kantara
Bir Lagama
El Audja
Gebel Amr
Wadi el Hafir
Gebel el Maghara
Bir Mahadat
Bir Ulad Ali
Wadi el Hama
El Ferdan
Kossaima
Ismailia
L. Timsah
Shobek
Toussum
Jifgaffa
Gebel Halal
Bir el Hassanae
Wadi el Arish
Serapeum
Sinai
Gebel Yelleg
Djebel Meghara
Mayen
Great Bitter Lake
Little Bitter Lake
Wadi el Jerafi
Maan
El Sheluf
Wadi el Bahhara
Desert
El Kubri
El Kuntilla
El Hameima
Suez
EGYPT
Kuweira
Akaba esh Shamie
Gebel el Gunna
Gebel Somar
Gulf of Suez
Eth Themed
Akaba

Reference
Railways..shown thus..
Roads
Scale of Miles
0 10 20 30 40

THE MAPPA CO., LTD., LONDON



No serious enemy counter-attacks followed. One, which might have been formidable, was frustrated by a curious means. An airplane detected some 2,000 Turkish infantry and 800 cavalry assembling on the 20th in a wadi near Hereira. Four of our machines promptly attacked this force, which was in mass formation, and dropped forty-seven bombs on it, scattering it with heavy losses.

There was no further infantry action during the summer. The British lines lay from Sheikh Ajlin on the sea to the Sheikh Abbas ridge, and then turned back to the Wadi Ghuzze, with their right flank extended to Shellal, whither a branch railway was being constructed from Rafa. There was a good deal of shelling at various points on the front, and one or two brilliant cavalry enterprises, notably that of 23rd–24th May against the Beersheba–El Audja railway, to prevent the enemy using its material for constructing a new branch line. Dobell, who had behind him a long record of difficult tropical warfare, and had been suffering for some time from the effects of sunstroke, resigned the command of the Eastern Force after the second battle of Gaza, and was succeeded by Sir Philip Chetwode. Major-General Chauvel was the new commander of the Desert Column, and he was replaced in the command of the Australian and New Zealand Mounted Division by Major-General Chaytor. After the second battle Sir Archibald Murray was recalled to England to report, and his place as Commander-in-Chief was filled by Sir Edmund Allenby, one of the foremost of British cavalry leaders, who came fresh from the command of the victorious Third Army at Arras.

Gaza was a check to British arms as undoubted as Gallipoli, and of a very similar type. The chance of a surprise failed through no fault of generalship, and when the next attempt was made it could only be a frontal attack, against which the enemy front had hardened like stone. It was unfortunate that such a check came at the end of so laborious and successful an enterprise as the Sinai campaign. The various stages in its advance—Katia, Romani, El Arish, Magdhaba, Rafa—had been brilliantly achieved. No desert campaign had ever been conducted with more expert foresight and skill. The engineering feats alone were sufficient to make it remarkable. The 150 miles of the Sinai Desert had defeated most conquerors who thought to force those dusty fastnesses, and the thing was not accomplished without the most painstaking organization. The troops who fought at Gaza were drinking water which came from Egypt. The chief obstacle was

nature, but the enemy was no bad second. He was skilfully led, and in the later stages he was numerically superior to the invader. The Russian *dégringolade* had done its work, and divisions had been released from the Caucasus for Syria. But in spite of the check at Gaza the foundations had been laid for future success. The road had been made once and for all across the desert, and it was only a matter of months till troops and guns and supplies could travel by it for a new concentration. A settled war of positions was not inevitable in such a land, and the little branch line creeping eastward from Rafa to Shellal was the fingerpost pointing to a far more deadly offensive.

III.

The Allied front at Salonika lay unchanged through the four months following the capture of Monastir. West of the Vardar the line was held against the Bulgarian I. Army by the Italian, Russian, French, and Serbian forces, and—at the end of the year—by the Greek contingent. There the front followed pretty closely the old Serbian border among the mountains which form the watershed between the Vardar and the Tcherna. West of these mountains the famous loop of the Tcherna was within the Allied lines, which ran north of Monastir to the Albanian frontier south of Lake Ochrida, and thence by a loose chain of posts to Avlona. The British army under General Milne faced the Bulgarian II. Army from the Vardar to the Struma, on the line of the lakes Doiran, Butkova, and Tahinos, a distance of some ninety miles. It was a long front for the forces at General Milne's disposal, and the exceptionally wet and stormy winter did not make his task easier. Moreover, many of the troops had been in line without relief for over a year, and they had had none of the exhilaration of a vigorous offensive. Much had been done to improve the highways and a new road had been constructed to the front on both sides of the Doiran lake, but the mountain paths still remained precarious and difficult. In the Struma valley the British right had been carried across the river close up to the enemy front among the foothills, and British cavalry pushed reconnaissances between Seres and Lake Tahinos beyond the Seres–Demirhissar railway. The Struma line having been secured, General Milne turned his attention to the more difficult Doiran front. By various raids our position was improved, and the offensive spirit of the troops sustained. At the end of February General Sarrail informed his commanders that he pro-

posed to take the offensive during the last week of April, as part of the great combined movement of all the Allies which had been planned for the spring. It was not easy during a dripping and boisterous March to secure the positions preliminary to a great attack, more especially in the Doiran sector, where the main objective was the ridge between the lakes and the Vardar. But by the end of March 1,000 yards had been won on a front of 3,000, and we were ready to attack the strong enemy salient in front of Doiran town.

Meantime during March the French and Italians in the Monastir area had been continuously engaged. On the 13th the Italians advanced against Hill 1,050 in the bend of the Tcherna east of Monastir. On the 17th the French took a village some four miles north of the town, and by the 21st had pushed up the Tchervenastena spur of the Baba range to the west. Five days later they captured its crest. During these operations over 2,000 prisoners were taken, of whom twenty-nine were officers. Farther west there had been some activity earlier in the year. Between the Italians at Avlona and the rest of the Allied front lay a considerable gap through which ran the Janina–Koritza road. In February an advance was begun into southern Albania, and by the middle of the month the gap was closed by the Italian occupation of the Janina road from Koritza to the Greek frontier.

The main offensive was postponed by Sarrail to 24th April, and on that day the British, after a long bombardment, attacked the Doiran fortress. The place was like a mediæval citadel, with a central keep flanked and fronted by groups of bastions and turrets. The keep was Hill 535, the centre of the Bulgarian third or main line of defence, and from it towards our line ran a long ridge with five humps on it known as the Pips. The enemy first line had as its main bastion a bare sugar-loaf hill called the Petit Couronné. In front of it, along its whole length, to complete the likeness to a mediæval castle, ran a moat, a deep gully called the Jumeaux Ravine. The British troops crossed the parapets at 9.45 p.m. on the evening of 24th April—the latest hour at which any battle in the campaign had begun. On the left all the enemy's first positions were taken. In the centre and right, however, the difficulties of the Jumeaux Ravine were so great that only a few of the troops reached the other side, and during the night that handful was driven back by counter-attacks. The close of the action left us with the western half of the enemy's first position, which we succeeded in securing and holding.

Sarrail had found himself obliged to postpone the attack of the rest of the army at Monastir and west of the Vardar. On the 8th of May Milne was instructed to make a second attempt, and he resolved to confine it to the section between the lake and the Petit Couronné. On the right gains were made on the slopes of the Petit Couronné, but lost by noon of the following day. Farther west a more considerable advance was made, and our line was pushed farther forward on the 15th and 20th. The result of the battle was that, at the expense of heavy casualties, we held a considerable part of the first Bulgarian line, our front running along the ridge from south of Krastali to Sejdelli village. On the 24th Sarrail ordered operations to cease throughout the battle-ground. It was not easy to see on what principle they had ever been undertaken. The British general had done his best to carry out orders which were probably the most aimless and unconsidered of any given in the campaign.

The problem before Milne was now the advent of the summer heats, with the grave risk of malaria and dysentery among the marshy valleys. To lessen the danger he abandoned his forward positions on his right and right centre, and, without interference from the enemy, withdrew his troops to the foothills on the right bank of the Struma and to the south of the Butkova valley. The Salonika front returned to its normal condition of trench bickering, but the monotony was broken by the dispatch of detachments for garrison duty in Greece itself. For during June the kaleidoscopic politics of that country had suffered a sudden and violent transformation.

The opening of 1917 had found the Athens Government in a more tractable frame of mind. M. Lambros was still Prime Minister, Dousmanis and his friends were still the King's advisers, but the Court and Army had done penance for the outrage of December, and the Greek divisions, in accordance with the Allied demands, were being moved to the Peloponnesus. But the peace was only seeming, and, as the world was to learn from later revelations, the nest of German intriguers in Athens was busy as ever. There were outbreaks of hooliganism the source of which was easily traceable, and evidence accumulated daily to show that King Constantine was very far from fulfilling the spirit of his assurances to the Allies. The latter were compelled to stiffen their demands, and in order to provide a buffer M. Lambros retired, and the respectable but ineffective M. Zaimis came again into power on 4th May. Meantime the authority of M. Venizelos and his National

Government at Salonika continued to grow in spite of all the diplomatic obstacles set to its expansion. Some of the chief islands—Corfu, Zante, Cephalonia, Skiathos, Cythera—declared for him, and the Allies were forced to respect the declaration. In Thessaly, even in the royalist strongholds, the leaven was working. A general satiety with King Constantine's rule, much increased by the stringent Allied blockade, was spreading throughout Greece. And by the end of May Venizelos had some 60,000 fighting men at his command to place by the Allies' side.

To the ordinary observer in the West at this time it seemed that King Constantine, having done the Allies' bidding, might now be let alone. But the men on the spot were aware that he was intriguing all the while with the enemy, and that his restless, shallow spirit would not be content with the *rôle* assigned to him. In dealing with such a character a certain harshness was inevitable, for apologies and protestations could not be taken at their face value, and the most solemn pact was meaningless, since honesty and goodwill were wanting. Moreover, various obstacles which had previously barred drastic action were now gone. Revolutionary Russia had small affection for kinglets, and Italy, having been given certain liberties of action on the Adriatic sea-board, was ready to sanction what she had formerly vetoed. By the end of May it was very clear that the day of reckoning with King Constantine was nigh.

From the first days of June events marched swiftly. On the 3rd Italy proclaimed the independence of Albania under her protection, and on the 8th occupied Janina, thereby cutting the last open line of communication between Athens and the Central Powers. On the 6th M. Charles Jonnart arrived at Salamis in a French ship of war as High Commissioner appointed by the Allied Powers. He had been Foreign Minister in M. Briand's 1913 Ministry, and in his earlier career had played the part in Algeria which Lord Cromer played in Egypt. He stopped for a few hours at Salamis, and then continued his journey to Salonika, where he saw Sarrail and Venizelos. On Sunday, the 10th, French and British troops entered Thessaly, partly to safeguard the harvest and partly to occupy certain points of strategic value like Volo and Larissa. For long Sarrail's left rear had been infested with bands of reservist *komitadjis*, and in view of coming events it was necessary to secure that area. At Larissa there was some treacherous shooting by a Greek detachment, but in most places the Allies were welcomed as liberators.

On Monday, 11th June, French troops seized the isthmus of Corinth, and that evening M. Jonnart arrived in Athens, accompanied by Allied transports. He summoned M. Zaimis to an interview on board his warship. The Prime Minister was informed that the Allies meant to purchase the Thessalian crop and distribute it equitably among all the Greek provinces. M. Jonnart added that they were now compelled to seek more satisfactory guarantees for the safety of their forces at Salonika, and that these could only be found in a restoration of the unity of Greece and the revival of a true constitutional government. He therefore, in the name of the protecting Powers, demanded the abdication of King Constantine and the nomination of his successor, that successor to be another than the Crown Prince.

M. Zaimis returned with his message, and a Crown Council was summoned. All that day there were alarums and excursions in the Athens streets. The bells of the city were rung spasmodically, and shouting and protesting crowds hung around the Palace. At three in the afternoon King Constantine signed an act of abdication in favour of his second son, Prince Alexander. On the morning of the 12th M. Jonnart received formal intimation of the act, and that afternoon a royal proclamation was posted up in the streets. "Obeying necessity and fulfilling my duty towards Greece, I am departing from my beloved country accompanied by the heir to the Crown, and I am leaving my son Alexander on the throne. I beg you to accept my decision with calm." That same day the new King issued his first proclamation, and he could scarcely be blamed if in that document filial piety was more conspicuous than political discretion.

That afternoon French troops began to disembark at the Piræus. About 5 p.m. the ex-King and his family left Athens for the summer palace at Tatoi, and early next morning embarked on the royal yacht at the village of Oropus, on the Gulf of Eubœa. Accompanied by two French destroyers, the *Sphacteria* steamed westward for an Italian port, carrying its master to a Swiss health resort. The world had become very full of kings in exile, but to Constantine the pity usually accorded to those who fall from high estate could scarcely be granted. He had amply earned his punishment, and bore with him the memory of no single honest and courageous action—only loose-lipped speeches and shabby intrigues.

The Germanophil party had no further cards to play. The more extreme among them, such as the German Streit, General

Dousmanis, the ex-Premier M. Gounaris, and Colonel Metaxas, were expelled from the country. Others, such as M. Lambros and M. Skouloudis, were allowed to remain under police supervision. The abdication was received with calm by the nation at large. On the 14th the Allied blockade of Greece came to an end. On the 19th a committee of four was appointed, consisting of two representatives of the Athens Government and two of the National Government at Salonika, to consider methods of reconstruction. On the 25th, at the invitation of M. Jonnart, M. Venizelos arrived at the Piræus, where he saw M. Zaimis, and came to an agreement with him about the next step. Clearly the decree which had illegally dissolved the Greek Chamber in November 1915 must be annulled, and that Chamber, which had been legally elected on June 13, 1915, convoked, and the leader of its parliamentary majority called to power. M. Zaimis resigned, and M. Venizelos formed a cabinet and set about the laborious task of rebuilding the ruins of his country.

The long game, the patient game, had succeeded. M. Venizelos, biding his time, had lived to see a divided Greece gradually draw towards unity from sheer weariness of discord. Quietly and firmly he began to build, loyal to the new monarch, loyal to the Allies, loyal above all to his country. In his reconstruction he revealed the same wisdom that he had shown in the dark days of waiting, and while he dealt drastically with treason, proved himself in all matters a constitutional statesman, respecting scrupulously the rights and liberties of his most bitter opponents. His work lay in a narrow area, and his problems were on a small scale compared with those which faced his colleagues of Western Europe; but in the mental and moral endowments of the statesman he had no superior, and perhaps no equal, among living men.

CHAPTER LXXIX.

THE RUSSIAN REVOLUTION.

March 16–*July* 23, 1917.

The Weakness of Russia—The Origin of Bolshevism—Lenin and Others—The Soviet Principle—Progress of the Provisional Government—The last Russian Offensive—Brussilov's initial Success—The *Débâcle*.

(*Map*, p. 84.)

I.

By 16th March the *coup d'état* in Russia was over, and the Revolution itself was beginning its stumbling career. The land was dazed and giddy. Even in the shouts of joy which hailed a newborn freedom there was bewilderment. The people were like men brought suddenly from a dark cell into the glare of a great powerhouse with its monstrous dynamos; they blessed the light, but walked fearfully and feverishly among strange things. And the light was not clear daylight, but a fantastic artificial glow, which distorted familiar objects, and seemed to bring the horizon within a hand's reach. All revolutions have certain features in common. In all there is the same blotting out of the past, the same confidence that the world can be started anew with a clean sheet. In all there is the same orgy of dishevelled idealism. The first impulse must always be towards peace and universal brotherhood, because bellicosity has been satiated in the destruction of an old régime, and the disposition of mankind is not towards eternal strife. It was so at the beginning of the French Revolution, when Wordsworth wrote :—

> " Meantime prophetic harps
> In every grove were ringing ' War shall cease ;
> Did ye not hear that conquest is abjured ? ' "

In all there is the same dissolution of the structure of society. The future of a revolution depends upon the shaping elements

which it may contain of a new discipline. Nature will not tolerate a vacuum. The old must be replaced by the new, and the new must be of the same quality as the old—it must be a discipline which will integrate and direct the nation.

Here lay the fatal weakness of Russia's condition. There was no such discipline, for her Revolution had come not from the burning inspiration of a new faith, but from sheer weariness. She had lost nerve and heart. She was tired in mind and body. It is instructive to remember how different was the case of France. There it had been the movement of a mass of people inspired by a definite creed of life, a mass which knew, however crudely, what it wanted, and was determined to achieve certain positive results. In Russia it was simply an automatic crumbling of old things, and the great bulk of the population had no object to strive for. In France the leaders of the Revolution had been essentially Frenchmen, of that stubborn middle-class which can create and continue and provide a force of social persistence. Some of them went mad, like Marat and Robespierre; but the majority were soldiers, lawyers, and men of affairs who could govern. In Russia there was no such middle-class, and the men who alone had a policy were international anarchists and communists, whose creed was one of furious negations. Again, her Revolution did not come upon a tired France. It broke down old barriers, and released a flood of energy which naturally flowed into military channels. Its law may have been harsh and cruel, but it was a discipline, and presently it took shape in a formidable army. In Russia war weariness made each step in her Revolution lead away from the discipline of soldiers, and that in the midst of a struggle of life and death. Finally, France acquired from her Revolution a sharper consciousness of nationality, but Russia lost the little she possessed. The autocracy had held in formal union elements different in race, speech, religion, and social tradition. With its disappearance the great empire began to split up like the ice on a lake when the binding spell of frost is withdrawn. The ideals of the new leaders were cosmopolitan, and there was no true nationalism to set against them.

These general elements of danger—the lack of a powerful guiding class, the absence of any constructive ideals for the new Government, intense war weariness, and an imperfect national integration—were prodigiously increased by the particular condition of Russia in the spring of 1917. The first difficulty was political. There was no authority, even provisional, which had

anything like the assent of the people at large. The shadow Government bequeathed from the old Duma had not the power to make its will effective. The police had gone, the army was drifting into chaos, and therefore it was difficult with the best intentions to use that force without which no Government can endure. Its authority was questioned all over the land by local soviets, which again had no clear policy of their own. Any attempt at firm administration roused at once the cry of "reaction," for order was identified with the vanished autocracy.

The second difficulty was economic. By all the rules of the text-books Russia should long ago have been in economic dissolution; but in spite of every conceivable blunder, the great natural wealth of the country enabled her to avoid an actual breakdown. But comfort did not exist. The mismanagement of transport, the scandalous "profiteering," and the corruption of the old Government led to preposterous prices for necessaries, and a general irritation and suspicion. Hence the Revolution meant industrial anarchy. The workmen had not the education to pursue a coherent policy like syndicalism; they were ignorant of the rudiments of economics, and used the situation as a lever to extort fanciful terms, regardless of the effect on their own future. The result was that production declined steeply, for its cost had become prohibitive. In the three great industrial areas, Petrograd, Moscow, and the Donetz, the supplies on which the army and the civilian population alike depended shrank at once by 40 per cent. The caprice of the workers knew no bounds, and the task of an employer of labour became more difficult than that of the man condemned to make ropes of sand. Two instances may be quoted out of many. An English cotton-mill in Petrograd, being faced with a stoppage through non-delivery of material, borrowed some bales from a neighbouring mill; the workmen would not let them be moved. In another Petrograd factory the men, whose wages had been increased threefold, summoned a meeting of the directors. Their delegates explained that they were now getting eight roubles a head more than formerly, and that they considered that they were entitled to this increase for the whole period since the beginning of the war. Eight roubles for five thousand men made 40,000 roubles a day, and 36,000,000 since August 1914. They requested the directors to put this sum in the sacks they had brought within twenty-four hours, or they would deposit the directors in the said sacks and throw them into the Neva. The Ministry of Labour managed to persuade the men that their demands were unfair,

upon which they withdrew them and apologized. The incident and its termination showed the *naïveté* of the classes who were now the masters of a great country. There was also the problem of the peasants—the great bulk of the population and the main reserves of the army. To them revolution meant the seizure of the soil, and at the first news of it they began to expel the landowners. Rural anarchy followed close upon industrial confusion.

The next difficulty was the army and navy. Just before the Revolution, in spite of maladministration and chicanery, Russia was better supplied with munitions of war than at any time since 1914. She had immense numbers of men mobilized—far too many for her immediate needs, so that the depots were crowded with troops whom she could not train, and who would have been far better left in their villages till the need arose. There were regiments in the line which had 15,000 men held in depot. This led to great popular dissatisfaction, and provided excellent material for pacificist propaganda to work upon. Hence, both on the fronts where there was no fighting, and in the rear where there was no organization, anarchy spread like wildfire. In the navy it was worse. The crews were not peasants, as in the army, but largely mechanics from the towns, and their long inaction had bred every kind of disorder. The Baltic Fleet became a farce, and the atrocities perpetrated in the early days at Kronstadt and on some of the battleships were an ugly blot upon the humane professions of the Revolution. The army and navy, instead of being the last support of order, had become an incalculable factor, a mysterious court of appeal which all parties used in argument, but of which nothing could be confidently predicated. When this fact is realized, it will be seen how tragically hard was the task of any Government at the moment in Russia. It could not use the natural weapons of authority because of the risk that these weapons might break in its hand.

The last and greatest difficulty lay in the Russian character. Readers of the great Russian novelists, notably of Dostoievski, will remember the singular tolerance which is extended to even the basest perversions of character. The charity of the writers is infinite and god-like, but it is also inhuman. For the world is conducted by means of certain working definitions of conduct, definitions which may be trivial enough in the eyes of Omniscience, but without which we cannot live our mortal lives. Lacking such rules, fallible as they are, we shall wallow in a bog of moral confusion where there is no clear division between right and wrong.

This quality of their novelists was likewise a quality of the Russian people. It had its noble and beneficent side, but it could also degenerate into a slack-lipped tolerance which twiddled its thumbs and spoke smooth words in the presence of cruelty and shame. In any case it was no quality for a revolution, which needed a positive creed and a single-hearted energy. The orientalism which is in the Russian nature revealed itself in a curious bonelessness in the presence of urgent needs. The majority cared too little to exert themselves. They were like Leonidas and his sister in Tchekov's *Cherry Orchard*, always waiting in the face of desperate crises for something to turn up. They might be willing to die for their faith, but they would not act for it. In such circumstances the power must fall into the hands of those who will stake everything, their own lives and other people's, on the game—the "rash, inconsiderate, fiery voluntaries" who have a positive purpose, even if it be only to destroy.

The foregoing considerations will show the immense difficulties in the way of producing in Russia, as the immediate child of the Revolution, any kind of constitutional Government, and especially a Government still able to continue the war by the Allies' side. Aversion to war was the one feeling shared by the great mass of the Russian people. The Allies had entered the campaign at the call of Russia; but that Russia had gone, and the new Russia was not inclined to accept its liabilities. Britain and France had been the types of civic freedom to the old Russian Liberals, but these Liberals in the whirligig of change were now regarded as reactionaries, and to the communists the constitutionalism of the West seemed indistinguishable from Tsarism and Kaiserism. They sought a headier draught of liberty. The frontiers were open, and German propagandists in different guises were busy among the workmen and soldiers. They had a simple *rôle* to play, for they had only to tell the people what they wanted to hear—that it was folly to fight longer, and that her Western Allies were the true foes of Russia, since they sought to force her to remain in the war. The new socialist papers, which sprang up in Petrograd like mushrooms in the night, told the same tale. Much German money was spent for the purpose, but it would be wrong to regard all the men who used it as consciously German agents. They acknowledged no country, and would take the money of any one to serve their own international ends. The result was soon apparent not only in the rapid demoralization of the Russian army, but in the hostility which began to grow up to all the Allies, and especially to

Britain. It was a tragedy which no forethought could have prevented. It was sometimes urged that it was due to the failure of Allied diplomacy, but that charge was idle. No Allied propaganda or diplomacy could have succeeded where the powerful pro-war parties in Russia failed. The Allies and the Germans in the country at that moment did not contend upon equal terms. The former preached a creed of honour which the people did not wish to hear; the latter preached an acceptable doctrine of self-interest which was supported by the people's leaders.

II.

At this point we must pause and turn our attention from deeds to dogmas, for the development of the Russian Revolution cannot be understood unless we first traverse its strange hinterland of theory. The general terms of political science are rarely given exact interpretation, and their slipshod use has tended to create false oppositions and conceal the fundamental agreement between the main parties of western Europe. Three in especial have been loosely handled—the terms "democratic," "popular," and "liberal." "Democratic" describes a form of government in which the policy of the State is determined and its business conducted by the will of the majority of its citizens, expressed through some regular channel. It is a word which denotes machinery, not purpose. "Popular" means merely that the bulk of the people approve of a particular mode of government. "Liberal" implies these notions of freedom, toleration, and pacific progress which lie at the roots of Western civilization. The words are clearly not interchangeable. A policy or a government may be popular without being liberal or democratic; there have been highly popular tyrannies; the German policy in 1914 was popular, but it was not liberal, nor was Germany a democracy. America is a democracy, but it is not always liberal; the French Republic has at various times in its history been both liberal and democratic without being popular. Accurately used, "democratic" describes a particular method, "popular" a historical fact, "liberal" a quality and an ideal.

The Western nations held, with wide latitude of interpretation, an identical creed, which, in the broadest sense of the words, was liberal and democratic. They believed in the slow perfectibility of political man, and in an orderly and organic progress; in a State which, while itself an entity attracting the devotion of its

citizens and affording them a richer and fuller life, did not curb too harshly the initiative and freedom of the individual; in liberty of opinion and in toleration; in a differentiation of classes as essential to a healthy civic life; in the inviolable right of each citizen to certain franchises and his not less inexorable duties towards the State and his neighbours; in the law as the bulwark of these rights and duties, set above the caprice of private wills; in the right and duty of each citizen to share in law-making and the routine of government; and in certain principles of Christian morality, which provided, so to speak, the attitude of mind with which the political code should be put in practice. To the main structure were added many adminicles; and, as frequently happens, machinery devices came to be regarded as in themselves essential principles. Representative and parliamentary government was such a device; it was not essential to a democracy, but it had proved itself a convenient method. Indeed we may go further and say that the "rule of the majority," the principle of the "plenary inspiration of the odd man," while apparently the simplest, was not the only, or in certain circumstances the best, way of ascertaining the will of the community. Because mechanism was too often confused with purpose, various critics had dealt destructively with the theory of liberal democracy; but the main fabric was intact, and the faith in its broadest sense commanded the allegiance of the best minds in Europe and America, and the vast majority of the peoples.

Against it there was now arrayed a creed which was at variance not with any accretion but with its innermost core of principle—a creed based on a different interpretation of history and a different code of ethics. This is not the place for any detailed study of the doctrine of Karl Marx—his "theory of value," which is economically dubious, and his materialistic interpretation of history, for which history provides no warrant. His teaching was based upon a false simplification of the past and a false simplification of human nature. Radically weak in his sense of psychology, he could reason with austere logic, but his conclusions were vitiated by the blunders of his premises and the narrowness of his data. It is as idle to deny the greatness of Marx as it is to exalt him into a seer. No man who has so profoundly influenced great tracts of humanity could be without certain large and potent qualities. As a destructive critic he is often supreme; his weakness is only apparent when he begins to create. He has left behind him phrases rather than reasoned policies, phrases which, because they can be interpreted with

infinite variety, have for many minds the spell of incantations; and of these the two chief are "the class war" and the "dictatorship of the proletariat." He cast these two shells of formulas upon the world, leaving to his successors the task of supplying the content; but, though he might seem to speak with different tongues, one thing was clear in all his many writings—he wholly repudiated the chief tenets of democracy and liberalism.

Marx is the source of one of the two channels in which Russian socialistic theory flowed for the generation preceding the Revolution. At the head of the other stands the Russian Lavrov, whose *Lettres Historiques* appeared in 1868.* He sought a philosophy of history and of society based upon the development of the individual. He found his ideal in a socialist State, where the State should not be an overriding tyrant, but should give the fullest scope for that "maximizing" of the individual life which was what he understood by moral progress. This view received support from a different angle from the teaching of Bakunin, who carried his individualism so far as to deny the moral value of the State altogether. Lavrov's point of view was always that of the historian. Liberty was his keyword, rather than justice; and he wished to conserve in Russia all the primitive socialism of the peasant communities and the traditional folk-culture of the Slav. He made his appeal not only to the industrial classes, but to the intellectuals, and very notably to the peasants, and agrarian reform was a chief feature in his programme. Such a creed did not preach class war in the common sense, and it was keenly alive to the organic value of national life. From it sprang the Social Revolutionary party, which about 1900 began to come into prominence in Russia. Typical members at the date of the Revolution were Kerenski and Tchernov. It was essentially a native Russian product, and it is hard to find for it a foreign parallel, though it had certain resemblances to the British Fabian Society and to the nationalist section of French Socialism.

To the materialism of Marx the only factors worth consideration were the forces of economic evolution. To him the State was everything, the individual nothing, and he construed the State rigidly in the terms of a single class. Justice was his keyword, and liberty was disregarded. The revolution which he sought was essentially a class revolution, and hence he looked upon nationalism as an obstacle to the realization of his aims. Directly from his teaching sprang the Russian Social Democratic party, which in 1884 was

* The first volume of Marx's *Capital* was published in 1867.

founded in Switzerland by Plekhanov and others. The teaching spread rapidly among the Russian industrial classes, and in some form or other was, at the date of the Revolution, the creed of the great majority of Russian workmen. But the harsh intransigence of the Marxian system was not altogether suited to Russian soil, and in 1903, at its second congress, the party had split into two. The *Bolsheviki*, or majority party, under the leadership of Lenin, drew narrowly the class distinction, and regarded the intellectuals, the bourgeoisie, and even the peasants, as enemies. They were international in their aims, and sought not the recreation of Russia, but the triumph of one class throughout the world. They were for the most part bitter and arid doctrinaires, who clung to an abstract creed as their Tablets of Sinai, and met every problem by a reference to the letter of their law; but they had the driving force which even the shallowest fanaticism gives. The *Mensheviki*, or minority, were of a saner type. Though they claimed for the working classes of the world the importance due to their numbers, they did not ignore other classes. They set their eyes on definite practical reforms, and were willing to use the existing machinery of the State for their purpose. The Great War broadened the divergence between the two groups. The Mensheviks, led by men like Plekhanov, Martov, and Tseretelli, accepted the war as a part of their programme. They recognized that Prussianism was the great enemy of their creed, and that nationalism must precede internationalism. They saw that the cause for which the Allies fought was their own cause, the cause of every worker in the world. Behind them they had beyond doubt the great majority of Russian Social Democrats. To the Bolsheviks, on the other hand, the fate of their country mattered not at all, provided that their policy of social reconstruction survived the calamity. They were eager for peace on any terms, that they might proceed with their own war, that class war which knew no political frontiers.

It is with this Bolshevik sect that we are chiefly concerned, for, though only a tiny fraction of the Russian people, it was soon to dominate the Revolution. Its leader must stand as the strangest figure of the war, and—whatever we think of his exploits—as one of the two or three most important by virtue of his influence upon the course of events and his domination over huge masses of men. A portrait gallery of the chief Bolshevik figures would not reveal many examples of manly beauty; indeed, all but a few would be set down from their physical appearance as hydrocephalous,

neurotic, or degenerate. Lenin himself was a plump little man, with a high bulbous forehead, a snub nose, and a bald head—the perfect *petit bourgeois* except for his steely grey eyes. His true name was Vladimir Ilitch Ulianov, a scion of a respectable house in the Simbirsk district, who, after his elder brother's death on the gallows for complicity in a Nihilist plot, had become an active leader in revolutionary propaganda. From 1900 onwards he was in Switzerland, where he created the extreme left wing of the Social Democrats. From 1905 to 1907 he was in Russia, where he found the reform party not yet ripe for his intransigence. His chance did not come till the outbreak of the Revolution, when he was permitted by the German Government to journey overland from Switzerland to Petrograd. He was in his own way the most consistent politician alive, for he had never wavered from the creed of destruction which he had formulated at seventeen, and now at the age of forty-six he was given the chance to put it into practice. He accepted German assistance and German gold, but he had as little love for the Hohenzollerns as he had for the Romanovs. He held his sombre faith with the passion of a dervish, and, without sense of humour or proportion, set about rebuilding the world after his crude patterns. But in the nature of things he could not live to see the complete new structure; his part, therefore, must be to destroy the old social system everywhere, that the poor and oppressed might at least be free of their taskmasters. Such a creed was not without a sombre greatness, and beyond doubt Lenin at this stage was a single-hearted fanatic, without fear or self-seeking, merciful enough in the common relations of mankind, but pitiless in the service of his cause. No scandals smirched his private life, and, unlike many of his colleagues, he was free from corruption. He was incapable of small personal animosities, but in the pursuit of his purpose he was as ruthless as some convulsion of nature. He had great debating power, and was an expert at ingenious manœuvring, but he won his victories less by these arts than by his iron consistency of aim and his utter fearlessness. He was resolved to coerce society into the procrustean bed of his formula, and nothing on earth or in heaven should be permitted to thwart his will.

The others were lesser people, but sufficiently formidable as carrion birds to prey on a dying nation. Most were Jews;* there were also Letts and Armenians in the group; few except Lenin

* It should be said that while Jews bulked largely among the Bolsheviks, they were equally common among their opponents. The Bolshevik Jews were as a rule very young, and it was a frequent comment that the Elders of Israel had lost control of the Jewish youth.

and Bucharin were genuine Russians. Trotski—otherwise Leiba Bronstein, the son of a Kherson chemist—had some claim to the second place. He had been a Menshevik, and as late as 1915 he was under Lenin's suspicion. He had none of his leader's pure cold fanaticism, being grossly vain, a lover of vulgar display, a mind easily made drunk with self-glory. His glowing black eyes, shaggy black hair, and thick sensual lips made him the perfect villain of melodrama, and in Bolshevism he was the pirate king, full of gesture and grandiosity. More of Lenin's stamp was Zinoviev—otherwise Apfelbaum—a Jew of the Ukraine, an adept in passionless, logical cruelty; and Bucharin, a Russian of the upper class, who had the courage at times to oppose his leader and who cherished the same brand of doctrinaire fanaticism. There were sentimental visionaries like Lunacharski and Tchicherin, and masters of intrigue and propaganda like Karl Radek, and mere crazy degenerates like Krilenko. But diverse as were the types, they were men who alike stood outside the system of ethics and polity which we call civilization; and alike owed allegiance to the squat smiling figure with the contemptuous eyes, who was once known to admit that in a hundred Bolsheviks only one was a true believer, and of the remainder sixty were fools and thirty-nine knaves.

What did this strange group of outcasts seek? They were Marxists, but not orthodox Marxists, for they claimed a right to a free interpretation of their master.* They sought to abolish a State which was based on a division of classes, and erect a State which was of one class only—the proletariat. Capitalism was to disappear, and in the single-class community the co-operation of all would take the place of the exploitation by the few. But before the unfeatured desert of this ideal could be attained, rough places must be crossed, and the method of attainment must be by a temporary dictatorship, the dictatorship of the workers, till capitalists and bourgeois were forcibly eliminated—converted or destroyed. Toleration was impossible, a synonym for weakness; the majority rule of democracy was equally impossible, for communists would never be a majority till they had purged the state by civil war. They were resolved to simplify society with the knife; a small elect minority, they would force the majority to do their bidding, because they were prepared to go to any length

* The reader may consult on this point Lenin's *The State and Revolution* (Eng. trans., 1919); Kautsky's *The Dictatorship of the Proletariat* (Eng. trans., 1919), a reply to Lenin; and Trotski's reply to Kautsky, *The Defence of Terrorism* (Eng. trans., 1921).

of terror and crime. It was class-rule carried to the pitch of mania, and murder exalted to be a normal function of the State. In this nightmare the categories of Western thought made unholy alliance with the dark fatalisms and the ancient cruelties of the East.

The chance of the Bolsheviks was found in the new soviet organization. In the unsuccessful revolution of 1905 there had been a Petrograd Soviet—the word means simply a council—and in March 1917 the example was followed, since the Duma was elected upon too narrow a suffrage to be truly representative. But the Petrograd Soviet now included soldiers and sailors as well as workers, and as the Revolution spread soviets on the same model began to appear in other cities. They were at first meant to be only a temporary expedient, a supplement to the Duma, till such time as a Constituent Assembly could be called. Their weakness was that they were too large, and consequently had to delegate executive authority to a smaller body, which was more easily captured by the extremists. The soviets were in close touch with the workshop committees now being instituted in the factories, and came soon to have an industrial as well as a political authority. Hence the way was prepared for regarding them as special associations on a basis of occupations or professions, and therefore rivals to any representative body elected on the majority principle. It was this aspect which the Bolsheviks exploited, and, after they had captured the soviets, adopted as the foundation of their rule.

III.

But at the start the soviets were, nominally at least, on the side of the Provisional Government. The duration of this Government—the opening stage in the true Revolution—was exactly two months, from 16th March to 16th May. It was composed mainly of men from the Centre and the Right Centre. It contained only one socialist, Kerenski, and he had already come to rank as a moderate. At first it seemed as if it might succeed. On 23rd March Miliukov declared for a republic, and so purged himself for the moment of his suspected conservatism. On 26th March Guchkov was at Riga, on a visit to Radko Dmitrieff and the Twelfth Army, and reported that the northern front was solid for the continuance of the war. The great army commanders had for the most part accepted the Revolution, and were acclaimed as its leaders. Alexeiev was in supreme command; Dragomirov replaced Russki with the Northern group of armies; Brussilov had

the Southern; a brave and competent soldier, Kornilov, was in command at Petrograd; only Evert, the general in charge of the Western group, had refused to accept the new régime, and Gourko had been nominated as his successor. By the first days of April it was reported that discipline was improving everywhere on the front, and that the first unsettlement had disappeared. On 30th March the Provisional Government issued a proclamation to the Poles, guaranteeing the creation of an independent Polish state, formed of all the territories in which a majority of the population was Polish. For the moment, too, the four thousand members of the Petrograd Soviet were open to reason. They seemed willing to co-operate with Guchkov and Alexeiev in restoring order at the fronts. A War Cabinet was created on the British model, consisting of Prince Lvov, Guchkov, Miliukov, Terestchenko, Shingarev, Nekrasov, and Kerenski, which kept in close touch with general headquarters. On 9th April the Prime Minister issued a proclamation setting forth the views of the Provisional Government:—

"The Government deems it to be its right and duty to declare that free Russia does not aim at dominating other nations, at depriving them of their national patrimony, or at occupying by force foreign territories; but that its object is to establish a durable peace on the basis of the rights of nations to decide their own destiny.

"The Russian nation does not lust after the strengthening of its power abroad at the expense of other nations. Its aim is not to subjugate or to humiliate any one.

"In the name of the higher principles of justice it has removed the chains which weighed upon the Polish people.

"But the Russian nation will not allow its Fatherland to come out of the great struggle humiliated and weakened in its vital forces.

"These principles will constitute the basis of the foreign policy of the Provisional Government, which will carry out unfailingly the popular will and safeguard the rights of our Fatherland, while observing the engagements entered into with our Allies.

"The Provisional Government of Free Russia has no right to hide the truth. The State is in danger. Every effort must be made to save it. Let the country respond to the truth when it is told, not by sterile depression, not by discouragement, but by single-hearted vigour, with a view to the creation of a united national will. This will give us new strength for the struggle and win us salvation."

This sane and loyal creed was emphasized three days later by Brussilov, in command of the Armies of the South, who told the soviets that, much as he esteemed their work for liberty, they must not presume to give orders to the troops, or to insist that officers

should be chosen by the soldiers like candidates for Parliament. "Such a thing has never been seen. It is known in no army in the whole world. If it were, it would not be an army, but a mob."

Towards the close of April the debates of the Petrograd Soviet revealed a curiously fluid state of opinion. Annexations and indemnities were renounced, but on the latter point the cases of Belgium and Serbia were ruled by the majority to lie outside the formula. On the whole, opinion was for the continuance of the war, provided it was waged on their own terms; but it was speedily revealed that these terms were impracticable. The majority followed the Mensheviks, like Skobelev and the two Georgians, Tseretelli and Tcheidze, in demanding that the Allies should at once fall into line with their views on war policy, and that, in the event of the Central Powers standing out, the war should continue. But there was also a general refusal to sanction those provisions for the maintenance of authority which alone could make a campaign possible. The Bolshevik minority demanded an immediate cessation of hostilities, since in their view the enemies of the Revolution were not the Central Powers, but the capitalists and bourgeoisie in all countries, and not least the then Provisional Government of Russia.

The intransigence of the minority, and the impracticable theorizing of even the moderate members of the soviets, had more popular appeal than the wisdom of the Ministers. The first demanded peace and then democracy; the second cried for democracy and then peace; the third called for victory, then democracy—and both peace and democracy were more pleasing aims than that victory which demanded a new resolution and a continued struggle. To help this natural bias the Central Powers summoned all their resources. German agents were at work from the first days of the Revolution in every factory and on every front—doves of pacificism, who, like those of the Psalmist, emerged from among the pots with silver and gold in their wings. Bethmann-Hollweg and Ludendorff had facilitated the journey of Lenin and his colleagues across Germany from Switzerland, in order that, like the spores of some fatal fungus, they should poison the Russian body politic. On 15th April Austria offered peace, and, though the offer was refused, it convinced the Russian masses that the enemy was becoming infected by their own spirit. More adroit still was the next move, for Berlin and Vienna, Budapest and Sofia mobilized their tame socialists, and approved of a conference at

Stockholm * in the summer, where it was hoped the Russian delegates would be entangled in a maze of theoretical discussions, and the plain issues of the war hopelessly obscured. The hapless Provisional Government had a task too hard for mortal statecraft.

From the first days of May it became obvious that it was losing ground. Miliukov, as Minister for Foreign Affairs, addressed a Note to the Allies, proclaiming the resolve of Russia to conclude no separate peace, but to carry the war to a victorious end. Something in the wording annoyed the soviets, and the streets of Petrograd were filled with processions carrying banners inscribed with the demand for Miliukov's downfall. The majority of the soviets were busy making appeals to the soldiers not to fraternize with the enemy, and pointing out the impossibility of a separate peace; but by their interference with normal discipline they took the best way of destroying the army. They insisted, among other things, that the functions of the officers were limited to issuing military commands, and that all other matters, including discipline, must be left to company or regimental committees where the private soldiers were in a majority. On 13th May Guchkov † resigned, since he could not be responsible for an army under such conditions. A day or two later Miliukov followed. He had uncompromisingly announced that Russia must have Constantinople, which, apparently, the new Russia did not want. He had stated Russia's obligations to her Allies with a candour which seemed to the soviets to smack of imperialism—a term under which they lumped everything, good, bad, and indifferent, that had any affiliations with the old world.

It was clear that the Provisional Government had now broken down, and must be replaced by a coalition on a wider basis, including more members of the Left. On 16th May a conference took place with the Executive Committee of the Petrograd Soviet, and an agreement was arrived at on policy, the two main points

* The invitation to the Stockholm Conference was issued early in April by various Dutch socialists, who had been co-opted on the executive of the *Internationale* when it was transferred from Brussels to the Hague after the outbreak of war. Their action was not approved by the Belgian leaders, who constituted the original executive, and M. Vandervelde formally dissociated himself from the scheme. On the other hand, M. Camille Huysmans, the Belgian secretary of the *Internationale*, accompanied the Dutch socialists to Stockholm. On 23rd May the Dutch-Scandinavian Standing Committee was formed, with Huysmans as secretary and Branting as president.

† He has been charged with a certain responsibility for the notorious Order No. 1 which wrecked army discipline, but it is clear that he opposed it with all his strength. The thing was wholly the work of the Petrograd Soviet.

being the unity of all the Allied fronts, and the necessity of combating anarchy. As a result several prominent members of the Left entered the Cabinet. Prince Lvov remained Prime Minister, and Shingarev, Nekrasov, Konovalov, Godnev, Manuilov, and Vladimir Lvov retained their old portfolios. Terestchenko succeeded Miliukov as Foreign Minister, and Tchernov, a Social Revolutionary and the leader of the Peasants' Party, became Minister of Agriculture. Skobelev and Tseretelli, two prominent Mensheviks, went respectively to the departments of Labour and Posts and Telegraphs, and Pieshekhanov, another socialist, took charge of Food Supply. Most significant change of all, Kerenski became Minister of War.

The new Coalition Government marked its advent to office by the issue, on 19th May, of a declaration of policy, confirming and elaborating the manifesto of 9th April—a declaration drafted in consultation between the Ministry and the soviets in spite of the opposition of Trotski, who had arrived in Petrograd the day before. This manifesto was answered cordially and sympathetically by the different Allied Governments, answers which were chillily received by the soviets and their press. The Allies, moreover, sent special missions to Russia to establish with the new régime relations which could scarcely be effected by the formal channels of diplomacy. M. Albert Thomas came from France, M. Vandervelde from Belgium, Senator Root from America, and Mr. Arthur Henderson from Britain. These trained and capable observers found before them a problem which defied easy definition. All parties seemed in a state of flux, the country was seething with that expansive type of speculation which is often miscalled idealism, and of the condition and future of the armies no man, least of all their generals, could speak with certainty. The High Commands were in the melting-pot. Alexeiev was dismissed early in June, and was succeeded by Brussilov, whose military talents were marred by a strain of demagogy and time-serving ; Kornilov had resigned his governorship of Petrograd ; Gourko was relieved of his command of the Western group, and was succeeded by Denikin. In these days Kerenski, convinced that an immediate offensive was necessary to tighten the discipline and restore the *moral* of the armies, flew from front to front, exhorting, upbraiding, inspiring. With his hoarse voice and burning eyes he was the kind of figure to move the wildest audience, and his lightning campaign had its effect among the troops. By the middle of June Brussilov reported that the Russian forces were fast recovering from their green-sickness.

Kerenski did more, for he succeeded in instilling the spirit of the offensive even into large sections of the socialist parties. For a little they seemed to shake off the spell of Lenin and his friends, and to be tending towards the view that victory in the field could alone safeguard the Revolution.

But during the month of June it was becoming very clear that the decorous socialists from the Western nations, M. Thomas, M. Vandervelde, and Mr. Henderson, were making no headway. They were classed as " imperialists " by the majority of the soviets. The idea of the Stockholm Conference had grown apace, and the essence of that scheme was a re-creation of the bankrupt *Internationale*. The net spread by Berlin was plain enough, but Russian socialists were too drunken with the new wine of dogma to be wary. They had no further concern with the Alliance, which had been devised by militarists and imperialists; they thought in terms not of nations but of classes; the causes for which the war had been undertaken now seemed to them a tale of little meaning. Hence they would not distinguish between men of their own persuasion in Allied and in enemy countries. " We expect," they told the Western delegates, " of the conference of socialists of belligerent and neutral countries the creation of an *Internationale*, which will permit the working classes of the whole world to struggle in concert for the general peace, and to break the bonds which unite them by force to Governments and classes imbued with imperialist tendencies which prevent peace. . . . We consider that the conference can only succeed if socialists regard themselves not as representatives of the two belligerent parties, but as representatives of a single movement of the working classes towards the common aim of general peace." The difficulty was that, whatever might be the views of Russia and her Allies, these were not the views of the Central Powers. The delegates of Berlin and Vienna, with a Government brief in their pocket, were already moving on Stockholm.

On 16th June the All-Russia Congress of Soviets opened in Petrograd under the presidency of Tcheidze—1,090 delegates, representing 305 bodies. The Swiss Zimmerwaldian, Robert Grimm, had already been expelled from the country, and the first act of the Congress was a triumph for the party of order—a ratification of the expulsion by 640 votes to 120. Trotski, whose Bolshevik following was about one-tenth of the whole, delivered a furious attack upon the Coalition Ministry, and especially upon Kerenski. He was answered by Skobelev and Tseretelli, the latter of whom

had become the leader of the saner elements in the soviets. "We desire," they said, "to hasten the conclusion of a new treaty in which the principles proclaimed by the Russian democracy will be recognized as the basis of the international policy of the Allies. A separate peace is impossible. Such a peace would bring Russia into a new war on the side of the German coalition, and would mean leaving one coalition only to enter into another." They explained that the Russian Government was taking steps to summon an inter-Allied conference for the revision of treaties, always excepting the London Agreement under which all the Allies had pledged themselves not to conclude a separate peace. Then came weighty reports from the different socialist Ministers. Kerenski gave an account of his visits to the front. Pieshekhanov urged the gravity of the food question. Even Tchernov, not usually addicted to moderation, warned his hearers that they must proceed by cautious steps, for socialism could not be achieved in a day. A resolution was carried to dissolve the Duma, since at a meeting a few days earlier Miliukov and Rodzianko had cast contempt upon internationalism. On the whole the Congress behaved discreetly, and gave honest support to the Ministry on the greater matters.

But the debates made it very clear how brittle was the whole machinery of government. Even when soviets and Ministry were agreed, it seemed impossible to use force against disorder. The session was constantly interrupted by the necessity of dealing with a preposterous incident in Petrograd. A group of Leninites, armed with machine guns, took possession of a house in the suburbs, and "held up" the neighbourhood. They declared that they were only exercising legitimate political activities, and the militia sent to expel them promptly fraternized with them. Neither Congress nor Ministry could do anything, and the resolutions in favour of the restoration of order were ironically punctuated by the processions of the anarchists from their suburban fortress. The Leninites remained undisturbed until, on 1st July, came the news of the Galician offensive. Then self-confidence awoke in the Government, the house was surrounded, and the garrison marched off to the prison below the Winter Palace. It was an instructive commentary upon the situation. The Government depended wholly upon fleeting waves of public opinion; normally that opinion was against any use of force, but it occasionally hardened, and then drastic measures could be taken. It provided the answer to those critics who clamoured for Lvov or Kerenski to use the strong hand. After the golden chance of the first two days

of the *coup d'état* had been missed, the strong hand would have tumbled the last precarious remnants of national order into chaos.

IV.

Kerenski had his will, and the Russian armies made one last effort at a serious offensive. Except for a local attack on the Stokhod in the first week of April, the enemy had not attempted to reap in the field for his own advantage the harvest of the Revolution. He was too wary to do anything that might weld the disunited forces of Russia once more into a nation. Rather he chose to encourage anarchy by inaction, and his offensive lay in the workshops of Petrograd and Moscow, and in the debating societies along the Russian front. But the Revolution had given him immediate military gains. Germany, though she still maintained some seventy-six divisions in the East, had been able to skim them for her "shock-troops," and to use that front as a rest-camp for units sorely battered in the West. Austria had removed to the Isonzo whole divisions and a great number of batteries to resist Cadorna's assaults in May and June. The Central Powers had made up their minds that for the moment there was no fear of a Russian offensive, and the long line from the Baltic to the Carpathians was loosely held. But they had it in their power to bring up reserves speedily in case of danger, for they had communications still working well, while those of Russia shared in the general confusion of the Revolution. The enemy dispositions on the front were much the same as they had been at the close of 1916. The German group, under Prince Leopold of Bavaria, extended from the Baltic to just south of Brzezany. The Austrian group filled the gap between it and Mackensen's Rumanian command, and its left wing, in front of Halicz and astride the Dniester, was the Austro-German army, under Count Bothmer.

The Russian front in Galicia ran west of Brody and east of Brzezany and Halicz; across the Dniester it just covered Stanislau, which had been the limit of Lechitski's advance the previous August. From Brody south to the neighbourhood of Zborov lay the Eleventh Army, which had once been Sakharov's and was now under General Erdelli. South of it to the Dniester was the Seventh Army, which Tcherbachev had commanded in 1916. Tcherbachev was now on the Rumanian front, and his place was taken by General Byelkovitch. Between the Dniester and the Carpathians Lechitski's old Ninth Army had given place to the Eighth Army,

which Kaledin had led in 1916 on the Styr. Its new commander was Kornilov, aforetime military Governor of Petrograd, a little square man like a Kirghiz Cossack, whose escape from an Austrian prison and wild journey across Hungary to Bucharest had made him a popular hero when Russia had still an ear for gallant tales. When Brussilov became Commander-in-Chief he had handed over the charge of the south-western group of armies to General Gutor, but he himself supervised every detail of the coming offensive. For it he had collected all the best fighting material that Russia could produce. He had the pick of the Finnish, Caucasian, and Siberian regiments; he had the cream of the Cossack cavalry; and he had by way of "shock-troops" some of those strange "battalions of death" who were vowed to perish to a man rather than surrender. He was well aware that he was making a gambler's throw. He could not hope to find reserves of the same quality when his picked troops were depleted. He had a chaotic hinterland behind him, where the transport must needs be ragged, and in Kiev people were thinking more of dividing up the land and winning independence for the Ukraine than of the enemy at their gates. But there was just the chance that a brilliant success and an example of gallantry and devotion might bring the tides of unrest into ordered channels, and shame the faint hearts into resolution. Kerenski was with the troops in the uniform of a private soldier, labouring to put his own fire into their hearts. And somewhere among the battalions, serving as a junior officer, was Guchkov, once Minister of War.

Brussilov's plan was to strike for the nearest place of importance in enemy hands, and this he found in the nodal point of Lemberg.* His strategy was ingenious. A frontal attack upon Lemberg from the direction of Brody, along the high ground forming the watershed between the Dniester and the Bug, was out of the question, for there the enemy had his strongest defences. If he sought to outflank him on the south he was faced with the long river-cañons which run to the Dniester, shallow at their source, but deep-cut and marshy nearer their confluence with the main stream. Brussilov's plan was to make the attempt in the Brzezany sector with the Seventh Army, and then to draw the Eleventh into the battle, as if he were about to extend his operations to the north. When he had thus puzzled the enemy, he proposed to fling in Kaledin's Eighth Army on the south bank of the Dniester against Halicz,

* There were to be simultaneous attacks by the northern group from the Riga bridgehead, at Dvinsk, at Lake Narotch, and south of Smorgon. The last attack, launched on 21st July, seriously alarmed the Germans.

and ultimately, if things prospered, against the vital point of Stryj, which would mean the outflanking of Lemberg. The sector for the first attack was some eighteen miles long, from Zborov, on the Strypa, along the east bank of the Tseniovka to its junction with the Zlota Lipa at the village of Potutory. Here the enemy's position defended the important point of Brzezany, through which ran the lateral railway that fed his front. The country was one of steep, wooded ridges, and around Koniuchy was a large tract of forest. It was the district where in the preceding September the right wing of Tcherbachev's Seventh Army had struggled in vain. It was now held by the enemy with ten divisions—three Austrian in front of Koniuchy, two Turkish before Brzezany, and five German divisions thence to the Dniester.

The artillery " preparation " began at 4.40 a.m. on the morning of Friday, 29th June. All next day the bombardment continued, and during the morning of Sunday, 1st July, till just after noon the infantry of the Seventh Army crossed the parapets. Kerenski had already issued a stirring order of the day:—

" Soldiers! The country is in danger. Catastrophe threatens liberty and the Revolution. It is time for the Army to be up and doing. Your Commander-in-Chief, who is so well acquainted with victory, reckons that every day of further delay strengthens the enemy, and that only a decisive blow can destroy his plans. . . . Let all peoples know that it is not from weakness that we speak of peace. Let them know that liberty has made our military power still greater. Officers and soldiers, know that all Russia blesses your exploits. In the name of liberty, in the name of the future of our country, in the name of an honourable and stable peace, I order you ' Forward ! ' "

It was indeed the hour of crisis in the history of the Revolution, and for a little it seemed as if Kerenski had succeeded, and the Revolutionary armies of Russia had proved their prowess beyond question. That first day the Austrian lines crumbled. By the evening Koniuchy was taken and three trench systems, and the Tseniovka was crossed. Next day the attack was resumed, and Potutory, at the mouth of the Tseniovka, fell, while the passage of the Zlota Lipa was forced south of Brzezany. By that evening there had fallen to the Russians some 18,000 prisoners, in spite of the flagrant indiscipline of many of their units. Next day, the Eleventh Army was in action north of the Tarnopol–Lemberg railway, and the heights west and south-west of Zborov were captured. British and Belgian armoured cars played a gallant part in these operations, for the weather was dry, and on the high ridges the ground was

passable. On 3rd and 4th July came the enemy counter-attacks, feeble as yet, for the Austrian divisions had been caught napping, and fresh reserves had not yet arrived. The Seventh Army was pressing direct on Brzezany, and the Eleventh Army operating between Koniuchy and Zborov. The blow had been delivered at the junction of the German and Austrian group commands, and the activity of the Eleventh Army seemed to presage a new movement against the main Lemberg front. Thither the reserves were hurried, and nothing was done to strengthen the line south of the Dniester.

While the struggle raged on the Zlota Lipa there began on Saturday, 7th July, a bombardment by Kornilov's Eighth Army on a sector of some ten miles from the Dniester below Jezupol southward along the sandy loops of the Black Bistritza, where lay the Austrian IV. Army. At noon on Sunday, 8th July, the Russian infantry attacked, and the result was a serious breach in the enemy's line. Kornilov carried the whole western bank of the Black Bistritza, took the town of Jezupol with its bridge, and many villages. This brought him to the wooded slopes of the Czarny Las, over which the Cossacks pursued the fleeing Austrians for eight miles, as far as the river Lukwa, which enters the Dniester just below Halicz. The booty of the day was 131 officers, 7,000 rank and file, and forty-eight guns, including twelve heavy guns. Next day the enemy fell back to the Lomnitza, and 1,000 more prisoners were taken. Halicz, which covered Bothmer's right, was now in danger of being outflanked from the south, while it was being assaulted from the east. At midday on Tuesday, 10th July, Halicz fell to a joint attack by Kornilov's right and Tcheremisov's left, and 2,000 prisoners were taken. At least two German divisions had been hurried down from Bothmer's command, but they failed to stem the tide. One Austrian division had lost two-thirds of its strength ; one German had lost half. Meantime Kornilov was across the Lomnitza, and next day he entered the town of Kalusch, west of that stream. This was the high-water mark of Brussilov's success. Stryj was the next objective, and at Kalusch Kornilov had already covered half the distance between it and Stanislau. If Stryj fell, Bothmer's line on the Brzezany ridge must follow. It would not give Lemberg at once to the Russians, but it would compel the evacuation of by far the strongest of Lemberg's defences.

But the impetus of the Revolutionary armies was now exhausted. The picked battalions had done their work, and had paid the penalty. The ordinary units were weakened by deser-

tion and long indiscipline; the communications were bad; the hinterland of the armies was disorganized; and though the delegates of the Soldiers' Committees had often led their men gallantly into action, ardour could not fill the place of orderly training. Moreover, the enemy had recovered from his first surprise. He had brought his reserves up, and had twice recovered Kalusch, only to lose it when the Russian bayonets came into play. The weather broke, the floods rose, and all three Russian armies found their movements checked. Kornilov during a week of swaying battles struggled gallantly on. His front was a sharp salient, and he strove to broaden it by winning the left bank of the upper Lomnitza towards the Carpathians. But on the 16th he was compelled to evacuate Kalusch, and retire everywhere to the right bank of the stream.

The 16th was the day of the Leninite outbreak in Petrograd, a date known beforehand to the German command. Kerenski had already left the front and gone to Kiev to debate Ukrainian independence with the patriots of Little Russia. On the 20th he hastened back to Petrograd to deal with the disorders of the capital. The day before had come the Austro-German *revanche*. The main threat was against the Eleventh Army in the region between the upper streams of the Sereth and the Zlota Lipa. It was not made in any great force, or attended by any mighty bombardment; it had no other aim than to relieve the stress south of the Dniester; it succeeded not of its own strength, but because canker had ruined the defence. At ten o'clock on the morning of that day one regiment holding an important sector simply abandoned its position. The rot spread, and before the evening the whole front was a rabble. A gap twenty-five miles wide was created, through which the enemy streamed. Next day, Friday, the 20th, the mischief continued, and the *débâcle* of the Eleventh Army compelled the retirement of the Seventh and Eighth. By Saturday evening the German horse were in the streets of Tarnopol; by Sunday the enemy had advanced his front thirty miles; and by Monday Tarnopol was securely in his hands. The gains of 1916 in Galicia had been wiped out in a day.

Let the telegram sent to Kerenski by the Commissary and Committees of the Eleventh Army record the tragic facts:—

"A fatal crisis has occurred in the *moral* of the troops recently sent forward against the enemy by the heroic efforts of the conscientious minority. Most of the military units are in a state of complete disorganization. Their spirit for an offensive has utterly disappeared,

and they no longer listen to the orders of their leaders, and neglect all the exhortations of their comrades, even replying to them by threats and shots. Some elements voluntarily evacuate their positions without even waiting for the approach of the enemy. Cases are on record in which an order to proceed with all haste to such and such a spot to assist comrades in distress has been discussed for several hours at meetings, and the reinforcements consequently delayed for several hours. . . . For a distance of several hundred versts long files of deserters, both armed and unarmed men, who are in good health and robust, but who have utterly lost all shame, are proceeding to the rear of the army. Frequently entire units desert in this manner. . . . We unanimously recognize that the situation demands extreme measures and extreme efforts, for everything must be risked to save the Revolution from catastrophe. Orders have been given to-day to fire upon deserters and runaways. Let the Government find courage to shoot those who by their cowardice are selling Russia and the Revolution."

The tale is too pitiful to linger over. The brethren of the men who had conquered at Rava Russka and Przasnysz, who had carried out the greatest retreat in history, who had fought with clubs and fists and sword-bayonets when they had no rifles—whose resolution no weight of artillery could daunt, and whose ardour no privations could weaken—who had come in their simple hardihood to the pinnacle of human greatness—had now sunk into a mob of selfish madmen, forgetful of their old virtues, and babbling of uncomprehended pedantries. In their retreat they looted, ravished, and murdered with hideous barbarity. Most pitiful was the case of those who still remained true to their salt, and were shot or trodden down by the panic-stricken and drunken horde, and of officers, who loved their men like children, and saw their life's work ruined, and themselves engulfed in a common shame. No great thing, it is true, can wholly fail. The exploits of Russia during the first years of war can never die. Their memory must beyond doubt revive to be a treasure and an inspiration for the Russia yet to be. But at the moment to Brussilov's heart-broken captains, striving during those awful July days to stay the rout in the Galician valleys, it seemed that a horror of great darkness had fallen upon the world, and that the best life-blood of their country had been idly shed.

CHAPTER LXXX.

THE ITALIAN FRONT IN THE SUMMER OF 1917.

May 12–September 18, 1917.

The Capture of Monte Kuk and Monte Santo—The Fight for Hermada—The Bainsizza Plateau won—The Struggle for San Gabriele—Cadorna closes his Offensive.

(*Map*, p. 542.)

DURING the first three months of 1917 there was a constant bickering along the fronts in the Trentino, the Dolomites, and on the Isonzo, but no movement other than an occasional trench raid. Italy was busy behind the lines preparing for a great effort, and the work of these winter months compared even with the sustained activity in northern France. Since the summer of 1916 2,000 miles of military roads had been constructed by the Austrians between the Adige and Cadore, and they imitated their opponents by a lavish preparation of "wireways," some of them having a length of from twenty-five to forty miles. They had at least thirty-six divisions on the front, of which some sixteen were on the Isonzo line. Italy was not behind in her effort. She raised and trained new regiments; she vastly increased her batteries and munitions; and she brought her aircraft fleet to a strength considerably beyond that of her enemy. Her engineers gave special attention to the Isonzo area. Along the top of the ridge, on the right bank from Sabotino to Caporetto, a vast system of high-level roads was constructed, and hundreds of heavy guns were emplaced behind the crest. The Italian bridgehead beyond the river at Plava could be reached only by a single narrow road from Verhovlje, closely overlooked by the enemy, and this fact had largely accounted for the failure to capture Monte Kuk in August 1916, when Gorizia fell. Capello now made a second road to Plava from Monte Corada, better sheltered from Austrian eyes, and descending the hillside in thirty-two marvellous hairpin bends.

The omens seemed to point to a Teutonic offensive as soon as

the weather improved, and it was the business of Cadorna to forestall it. He had hoped to attack in April, but the lateness of the spring forced him to hold his hand. His plan was to engage the enemy on the whole Isonzo line, from Tolmino to the sea, by an intense artillery action, so as to puzzle him as to where exactly the infantry were to be launched. At the same time, by showing a vigorous front in the Trentino he would hold off the assault which the enemy had for some weeks threatened in that quarter. When the appointed day came, he would strike hard with his left on the Isonzo against the Austrian position on the steep heights from Santo to north of Plava; and then, as soon as the enemy had concentrated his reserves there, launch a great attack on the southern Carso toward Hermada.

On 12th May began the Italian bombardment, in which British and French heavy artillery assisted, and by the morning of the 14th it had attained a hurricane fury. The main section of attack was that between Globna, a mile north of Plava, and the defile of Salcano, almost in the suburbs of Gorizia; but there were demonstrations elsewhere, so that the whole fighting front was nearly twenty miles long. The effect of the guns was so crushing that the Austrian first trenches disappeared, and Italian raiders returned with batches of dazed and broken prisoners. The Italians had but the one bridgehead, that of Plava; but on the morning of Monday, the 14th, they succeeded in flinging over a second bridge a little downstream, opposite Zagora. About noon the infantry advanced. There were subsidiary actions south of the Vippacco and at Fajti Hrib, on the Vertoibizza, and at Hill 174, north of Tivoli. But these were only distractive. The great effort was from Plava to Salcano, where Capello's Second Army was directed against the heights east of the river. Success came slowly at first. On the left the Udine Brigade won Hill 383, east of Plava, and the Florence Brigade, pushing their way gallantly through a devastating fire, reached Hill 535, a northern spur of Monte Kuk. The Avellino Brigade crossed by the new bridge at Zagora, and took the fortress of Zagomila. On the right the Campobasso Brigade struggled up the slopes of Monte Santo. It was a creditable day, but as yet far from victory. The attack was for the most part held in the Austrian second line, which was 800 feet above the stream.

During the darkness two battalions of Bersaglieri and Alpini surprised the enemy and forced a passage of the river near Bodrez, between Plava and Tolmino, where they organized a bridgehead

and held their ground. At dawn the attack on the hills was resumed along all the line. The Florence Brigade, a little after midday, reached the northern summit of Monte Kuk (Hill 611); and the Avellino, working up from Zagora, took the southern crest, and drove the enemy from Hill 524, one of the spurs of Monte Vodice. Less fortunate was the Campobasso Brigade, which found that it could not maintain itself on the ridge of Monte Santo, and had to withdraw well below the summit line. This tremendous fighting, under a May sun, and up steep wooded slopes of nearly 2,000 feet, had given Cadorna the western gate of the Bainsizza plateau, and observation over all the rear of Monte Santo and the enemy communications for the front on San Gabriele.

It was not to be expected that the Austrians would lose such key-points without a struggle to regain them. Wednesday, the 16th, was a day of incessant counter-attacks, not only against Kuk and Vodice, but against the central Carso position. They gained nothing, and the Italians worked their way slowly along the ridge towards Santo, gaining the highest summit of Vodice (Hill 652). New Austrian batteries, which had been brought from the Russian front and established on the Carso, were hastily sent north of Gorizia. The fight lasted till the 22nd, and was waged not only on the Isonzo, but on the west of Lake Garda, in the Adige valley, and on the front between Asiago and the Val Sugano, the fiercest assault being on the Tooth of Pasubio, a rock tower of the peak which was the key of the Italian line west of Asiago. The honours remained with Cadorna, who added to his gains Hill 363, east of Plava, and the villages of Globna and Palliovo. Meantime, on the 18th, the bridgehead detachment of Bersaglieri and Alpini far to the north at Bodrez, having fulfilled its task of worrying the enemy's flanks, was withdrawn across the river. It had been a brave adventure. A handful of men had crossed before dawn, building a rough bridge which in an hour or two was destroyed by Austrian shells. They were then left with some hundreds of prisoners in their hands, and a flooded river behind them. They sent back their captives by means of a cable ferry, and prepared to maintain the fort against all comers. For four days they stood their ground, beating off every attack, and even advancing far up the mountain side—two battalions holding a front of two miles.

The result of the first stage of Cadorna's offensive was all that could be desired. The prisoners numbered 7,113, including 163 officers; 18 guns were captured, and a vast quantity of trench mortars and machine guns. The Italians had nearly all the rocky

eastern bastion of the Isonzo from Hill 363 opposite Plava, by way of Monte Kuk and the twin peaks of Vodice, to the saddle of Hill 603, and thence along the western slopes of Santo. Already their guns were hammering the hinterland of Santo and San Gabriele.

The second act of the drama opened on 23rd May, on the front between the southern edge of the Carso and the Adriatic, where was the right wing of the Duke of Aosta's Third Army. There the coast road to Trieste was blocked by the steep Hermada, which in turn was defended from the west by a reedy marsh to be crossed only by narrow causeways. On the evening of the 22nd there had been a heavy bombardment, principally in the Santo and San Gabriele section, but there had been comparative quiet on the Carso. But at six o'clock on the morning of the 23rd every gun of the Third Army opened fire, and for ten hours their fury continued, till at four in the afternoon the Italian infantry crossed their parapets. The Duke of Aosta's left wing demonstrated against the line from Volkovnjak southward by Hills 378 and 363. The main attack was that of the centre and right wing, where the Bologna Brigade carried the Austrian trenches south of the Kostanjevica–Hudi Log road, turned the latter village from the south-east, and swept beyond Lukatic. The right wing took Jamiano, stormed the village of Bagni among the coast marshes west of the mouth of the Timavo, and won the low hills marked 92, 97, 77, and 58. One hundred and thirty airplanes, including a group of hydroplanes, assisted in the battle. The result was that by the evening the Austrian first and second positions had gone, from Kostanjevica to the sea. The enemy, deceived by the feint beyond Gorizia and in the northern Carso, was completely taken by surprise, and, violent as were his counter-attacks, they were tardy and disorganized. Before the day ended, the Italians had taken more than 9,000 prisoners, including 300 officers.

At dawn on Thursday, 24th May, the fight was renewed in that strange tricolour country of red chalk, white limestone, and emerald grass. Two British monitors, assisted by Italian light craft and seaplanes, bombarded the seaboard in rear of the Austrian line; for though the road and railway from Trieste were sheltered by a low ridge of coastal hills, there were exposed gaps at Nabresina and Prosecco. The Barletta Brigade continued to press on the left of the line. The centre, consisting of the Padua and Mantua Brigades, operated against the Hudi Log salient, and won the Hills 235 and 241 north of the Jamiano–Brestovica road. The right—the Tuscan, Arezzo, and Bergamo Brigades along with part

of the 2nd Brigade of Bersaglieri—drove the enemy back to a line running from the village of Flondar to the mouth of the Timavo. On Friday, the 25th, the struggle continued. The left wing of the Third Army fought its way through a fierce barrage from the north towards Kostanjevica. The centre carried Hudi Log and its labyrinthine salient, and for a moment won a footing in Kostanjevica itself. Its ultimate line was from Hill 202, south-east of Hudi Log, to Hill 251, south of Kostanjevica. The right wing, attacking at four in the afternoon, carried Flondar, and pushed outposts on to the heights which lie between Medeazza and San Giovanni. For the first time the Italians stood on the skirts of Hermada.

Next day and the following the weather was bad and the progress was slower, though ground was gained everywhere on the right and centre, the Timavo was crossed, and the village of San Giovanni taken. On Monday, the 28th, the 45th Division, on the extreme right, took the little seaside hill marked 28, but could not maintain itself there under the fire from Hermada. Still the marshes had been passed, and the Italian line was firmly on Hermada's skirts, facing the main rampart across the shallow valley beyond Medeazza. Already the south face of the great fortress had been dismantled of its guns, which were withdrawn to safer emplacements in the rear. The Italian troops had suffered greatly, for the five days' battle had been fought on the most arduous battle-ground on earth. In that stony place trenches could not be easily improvised, and since the old Austrian lines had been crushed to atoms, the Italians had, as a rule, to face counter-attacks in the open. Accordingly a halt was called to rest and refit, and by 30th May, when the weather finally broke, the battle had virtually died away.

The second stage of Cadorna's offensive had prospered well, though not in accordance with the extreme hopes of its promoters. Prisoners numbered 16,568, including 441 officers; 20 guns were taken, and many more were destroyed by the enemy through fear of capture; and a great quantity of stores of all kinds fell as booty to the attack. Between Kostanjevica and the sea the Italian line had been advanced from one and a half to two and a half miles on a five-mile front, the difficult marsh country had been crossed, and a footing had been won on the slopes of Hermada. But the two pivots of the Austrian line still stood firm—the heights around Kostanjevica in the north, and Hermada itself, with its tunnelled rocks and splintered oak woods. The great gain for

Cadorna was that he had won elbow-room. He had broken through the larger part of the intricate trench works which had so long constrained him. The whole action from the 14th to the 28th of May was one of the most solid successes yet won by Italian arms. Thirty-eight Austrian guns had been taken, and 23,680 prisoners, including 604 officers. It was notable that the Austrians claimed some 14,000 prisoners, and probably with truth. Troops which advanced too far in assault in such a country were either destroyed or made captive, for there was little chance of digging in and establishing a post which could be linked up with the main line.

Cadorna's success had inspired profound uneasiness in von Arz, who had succeeded Conrad von Hoetzendorff as Chief of the Austrian Staff. All through the Carso battle he had attacked without ceasing in the Kuk and Vodice region, in the hope of diverting the Third Army from its purpose. A council of war was held at Laibach, and an urgent summons for help was sent to Berlin. Guns and troops were hurried from the stagnant Russian front, but they arrived too late to effect much during the course of the battle. In the belief, however, that the new Italian line must be rudimentary and ill-sited, a great counter-stroke was determined upon for the first days of June.

It began on 1st June with a heavy bombardment of the ridge of Fajti Hrib, and infantry attacks on Hill 174 at Tivoli, and the southern crest of Vodice. These lasted through the next day, and on Sunday, the 3rd, the artillery bombardment covered the whole Carso front from San Marco to Flondar. The Italian counter-battery work was excellent; but that evening the Austrian guns redoubled their violence, and their infantry gained some ground on the ridge of San Marco, only to lose it under a counter-attack. On the morning of Monday, the 4th, a great effort was made against Fajti Hrib by two picked *Sturmtruppen* battalions of Hungarians and Tyrolese. They attacked on two sides of a rectangular salient, and won a footing in the Italian positions. Then came the Italian curtain fire on the saddle between Fajti and Hill 464, which cut off the spearhead of the attack from its shaft. By the evening the Tiber and the Massa Carrara Brigades had retaken the ground and annihilated the storming party. That same day there was severe fighting farther north on the line between Versic and Jamiano, the southern pivot of the Carso front. The battle swayed with varying fortunes, but the troops of the 61st Division finally beat off the enemy, and remained in secure possession of what they had won. South of Jamiano the situation was more difficult. There

the new Italian front was strategically badly placed, and in the struggle of the 5th the outposts were driven in, and the right wing of the Third Army forced back from Flondar and from the slopes of Hermada—a loss of from one-third of a mile to a mile and a quarter on a front of some three miles. This remained the sole Austrian gain from the counter-stroke, and it had been won at the expense of heavy losses and by the use of large new reserves. Four fresh divisions from the Russian front were identified during the two days' action.

With the cessation of the Austrian counter-attacks the battle died down on the Julian front. It had cost the enemy 24,000 prisoners and not less than 100,000 in dead and wounded. It had brought the Italians to the true gates of Trieste—the edge of Hermada in the south, and, in the north, of the Bainsizza plateau, which was the key of San Gabriele and San Daniele and the Ternovanerwald. Only those who were intimately familiar with that countryside could realize the enormous strain which such a campaign put upon the endurance of an army. The Julian battles must be short, for flesh and blood could not bear the prolonged agony of the effort demanded. Hence, during the remainder of June, the centre of interest swung northward to the high mountains. In a history where only broad lines of strategy and major actions can be considered, a thousand brilliant episodes must be left unchronicled. In no part of the European battle-ground were these more frequent than along the intricate front of the Trentino and Cadore. Such were the wonderful achievements in the Primiero district in the summer and autumn of 1916; the fighting around the Drei Zinne in the Cortina Dolomites during April 1917; the struggle for the Tooth of Pasubio during the May offensive; and the achievement of the troops of the 52nd Division in June on the Asiago plateau, where they carried the rock-wall rising from the Val Sugana and known as the Line of Portule, taking a thousand prisoners, and won and held the summit of Monte Ortigara.

After midsummer 1917, Cadorna was compelled to reconsider with care his whole plan of campaign. The strenuous offensive which he had conducted for two years on 470 miles of front had taken his lines almost everywhere inside the enemy borders; but since the frontier had been long before designed by Austria not for defence but for offence, mere gain of ground had not brought him near a decision. In May and June he had won conspicuous strategical points; but clearly this battle in sections

could not continue for ever. He reviewed his forces, and found them too weak in artillery for what was pre-eminently a war of guns. The struggle among the hills of the Carso and the Isonzo was costly, and the enemy, refreshed with drafts from the Russian front, was now the quicker of the two sides to recover from losses. But he believed that beyond San Gabriele and the Iron Gates of the Carso lay a mighty prize for the conqueror—not a city or a province alone, but the destruction of Austria's fighting power. For such a prize he needed the help of his allies, and accordingly the second stage of his summer offensive, which had been originally fixed for July, was postponed till the matter could be discussed in Paris and London.

There was as yet no Allied War Council in permanent session, so the affair resolved itself into informal negotiations with the governments of France and Britain. Cadorna's proposal was not unreasonable. He asked for batteries, and for such troops as could be spared from the French and Flanders fronts, in order to produce a momentum which would result not in the gain of a ridge or a peak, but the clearing of the way to Trieste and open warfare. Unfortunately, the Allies were already committed to extensive operations. Haig had his great Flanders campaign, for which the plans had long been laid, and Pétain was nursing back his armies to offensive vigour with a view to attacks at Verdun and the Chemin des Dames. British and French batteries were available; but no infantry could be spared till the main Western operations were over, and by that time the season would be too late for Cadorna's scheme. In this refusal there was no lack of good will towards Italy, or of admiration for her brilliant campaigning. On purely military grounds it was right to put the emphasis on the Western front. There stood Germany, the great enemy, and no defeat of Austria in the field would strike at the heart of the German power. It was abundantly clear that the Dual Monarchy, even if it wished, could not break from its entanglements; and though the Italian flag had waved over Trieste by September, little would have been won towards the main purpose of the war. For the Allies to forgo their assault upon the German line and to concentrate with Italy against Austria would have been to ignore the true centre of gravity in the campaign. There were critics—civilians, for the most part—who saw in the refusal a prime strategic blunder. With Allied help, they said, Cadorna might have stormed his way to Trieste and Laibach, and have repeated the exploit of Napoleon in 1797. The answer to such fantasies was that, even if

he had, it would not have produced any real decision, and it would have exposed the Flanders and French fronts to a perilous German counter-stroke. Moreover, the Napoleon of 1797 was a dangerous object of imitation. His plan was militarily unsound. He succeeded by bluff rather than by strategy. Had Thugut and the civilians in Vienna not lost their nerve and overruled the Archduke Charles, it is more than likely that Bonaparte's career would have ended in disaster among the Styrian hills.*

Cadorna was therefore left to his own resources. He had many difficulties in his way. He was fighting against time, for the fiasco in Galicia in July had proved beyond doubt that Russia must be written off the Allied assets, and that the trickle of Austrian troops from Galicia would presently become a steady flow. His men

* The position of Bonaparte in 1797 deserves a note. In 1796, while the Archduke Charles foiled the attempts of Jourdan and Moreau to advance on Vienna from the Rhine, Bonaparte in Italy had forced Piedmont to make peace, had occupied Lombardy, and had besieged Mantua. On February 2, 1797, Mantua fell, and the Archduke Charles, now on the Piave and heavily outnumbered, believed that Bonaparte would march into Tyrol and join hands with the French on the Rhine. Joubert's force of 20,000, then at Trent, looked like the vanguard of such a movement. Bonaparte, however, resolved to march on Vienna by the Mur and Mürz valleys and the Semmering pass. On 16th March he was across the Tagliamento, while the Archduke Charles retreated by Gorizia towards Laibach, detaching small Austrian forces to hold the passes on the Fella and at Plezzo. Bonaparte reached Gorizia on 19th March, and ordered Massena to advance on Tarvis, Guyeux to move by Cividale and Caporetto, and Serrurier to march up the east bank of the Isonzo—all three divisions to meet at Tarvis, while Bernadotte was to follow the Archduke. By 24th March Bonaparte reached Tarvis, where he found the three divisions; while the Archduke, followed by Bernadotte, crossed the Loibl pass and reached Klagenfurt on 28th March. That day Bonaparte advanced from Tarvis and occupied Villach, while the Archduke retired from Klagenfurt through St. Veit. The pursuit continued up the Mur valley, the Austrians fighting rearguard actions, till on 6th April the Archduke reached Bruck at the junction of the Mur and the Mürz. His forces were increasing, and he hoped to make a stand west of the Semmering pass. Bonaparte was clearly anxious, and at the end of March had made a proposal to Austria for peace; for he had news of a rising in his rear, and he knew that to force the Semmering would be a difficult task. The statesmen in Vienna were still more alarmed, and, against the wishes of the Archduke, concluded an armistice on 7th April. On 18th April the preliminaries of peace were signed at Leoben. Bonaparte had won by successful bluff, without the crucial test of a fight for the Semmering. He had assets which were not with Cadorna in 1917. He began with far superior numbers, and knew that the Austrians could not hold the river crossings against him or delay more than a few days his march into Carinthia. Even if we assume that Cadorna had been able to reach Klagenfurt, the strategy of the Archduke would still have been available for the enemy with increased advantages. For a stand in the western Semmering valley Austria would have had as a main line of supply the Semmering railway, and, as communications for flank forces to hold the ridges of the Styrian Alps, the lines from Linz and Salzburg on the right and the line from Hungary by Gratz on the left. Cadorna's advance would have been into an ugly re-entrant between high mountain walls. Further, in 1917 the Austrians had a united command and interior lines, while in 1797 there was no such unity of command, and there was imminent peril from Hoche's large army on the Rhine. The campaign is fully discussed in General von Horsetzky's *Feldzüge der letzen 100 Jahre.*

were weary, for the strain of the Italian fighting was almost beyond the endurance of flesh and blood. No progress could be made except at the expense of desperate valour and suffering; and to hold the positions won, as was proved by the Alpini's brilliant exploit in June on the Ortigara, was scarcely less costly than to win them. The bravest soldiers in the world will grow dispirited when they see their best efforts still far from any tangible victory. Moreover, the country behind him was full of danger signals. There was industrial trouble in Milan and Turin. The civil Government was out of favour; the Prime Minister, Boselli, was an old man of eighty; and Orlando, the Minister of the Interior, had shown little firmness in handling domestic discontents. The foes of Italy were not only before her gates but in her own household. The land was full of pacificist talk, and, in spite of Cadorna's appeal, nothing had been done to check peace propaganda among the troops. Italy's heavy losses made only too good a text for such discourses, and the Vatican Peace Note of 1st August, especially the phrase about "useless slaughter," was used to give the weak-kneed and treacherous elements among the people the impression that they had the support of the Holy See. Cadorna's new offensive, therefore, carried the political as well as the military fortunes of Italy. He must succeed greatly and soon, or there was danger of losing all.

There were three main redoubts which might be regarded as the keys of the Austrian front between Plezzo and the sea. One was the Lom position, guarding on the south the enemy bridgehead at Tolmino and the Idria and Baca valleys, by the latter of which ran the railway to Vienna. The second was Monte San Gabriele, the key of the Ternovanerwald, which, till it was won, barred Italy's progress east of Gorizia. The third was Hermada, on the seashore. Of the three, San Gabriele was the most vital and the most difficult. It might be turned, but it could not be taken by direct assault. It was, accordingly, Cadorna's intention to "feel" a long length of the enemy front by a general attack to find where, if anywhere, lay the weak spot. Once that was found, the attack could be pressed hard with the object of winning ultimately one or other of the three keys. It was the greatest effort made by Italy since the fall of Gorizia. The summer battles of 1917 had been on short fronts, and had lasted only for a few days. This was an operation on a line of thirty miles, and it was meant, if successful, to continue till the first snowfall.

At Gorizia the Isonzo bends to the north-west, and then in a

wide curve to the north-east towards Tolmino. At the first bend Monte Santo towers above the eastern bank, and below it the Chiapovano valley makes a break in the rim of hills. South of that valley runs the chain of Monte San Gabriele and Monte San Daniele, the northern defence of the Gorizian plain. North and north-west of it, beginning from Monte Santo, is the line of heights on the left bank of the Isonzo, running to where the Baca valley enters from the east below the hill of Santa Lucia. The battles of May had given Cadorna all the hills above the river north of the Chiapovano valley as far as Plava, with the exception of Monte Santo. The enemy still held San Gabriele and the ridges south and east of it. Between the Chiapovano and the Baca valleys a loop of the river enclosed the high broken region called the Bainsizza plateau, bounded on the west by the hills lining the Isonzo. This upland was cut by glens descending to the Isonzo, and had many peaks and subsidiary plateaux; but it formed a region where transport was comparatively easy, and its possession was the key of the Austrian position above the river. If it could be carried, Monte Santo would fall, and San Gabriele and the other heights of the Ternovanerwald might be turned in flank. Cadorna held the eastern rim of the Isonzo valley from Plava to just short of Monte Santo; north of Plava the Austrians were on the west bank. It was clear that the Bainsizza could not be won by an advance from the narrow front of Kuk and Vodice. The eastern rim must be carried north of Plava to allow of a broad front and a converging attack.

On the morning of Saturday, 18th August, in hot, clear weather, a great bombardment began along the whole line from Tolmino to the sea. In the afternoon Capello's Second Army moved north-east from Plava, and seized the foot of the little Rohot valley, which divides Monte Kuk from the Bainsizza plateau. That night the work of crossing the river from Plava to Santa Lucia was begun. It was no light task to force that swift moat, where at every easy crossing-place were strong Austrian machine-gun posts. By dawn on the 19th fourteen bridges had been constructed; and during the morning, while mist lay thick in the gorges, the Italians broke through the front line of the enemy defence. Halfway up the slopes they met the second line of caverns and redoubts. On the crest was a third line; while behind it, radiating from the central peak of Jelenik, was a strong support system. The frontal Italian attack pushed up the Rohot glen, but found a stubborn resistance in the reserve position behind Descla. Mean-

time on their left the 1st and 5th Bersaglieri Brigades, advancing between Canale and the Avscek gorge, pierced the enemy defence north of Jelenik, and by the evening gained a position from the Avscek to the hill called Kuk 611. Farther north the eastern rim of the valley was won opposite Doblar, but beyond that the precipitous fall of the hills to the river from the Lom plateau prevented an extension northward of the front of attack. The Lom was vital, for it dominated Tolmino and the Baca and Idria valleys; but the only route to it was from the Avscek glen by way of the small Kal plateau. After heavy fighting the Italians won the western edge of the Kal, but between them and the Lom was still the deep wooded gorge of the Vogercek torrent.

South of Gorizia the Duke of Aosta's Third Army was not less hotly engaged. The 23rd Corps, under General Diaz, carried the village of Selo, and in the Hermada section the ground was regained which had been lost in June to the Austrian counter-attack. In the northern part of the Carso progress was slower, though the Pallanza Brigade won an important position south-east of Fajti Hrib. Elsewhere on the long front there were only artillery engagements. That first day taught Cadorna all he wanted. He now knew that the weak spot in the enemy's defence was on the heights of the middle Isonzo, and he strove to increase his advantage before Boroevitch could bring up his reserves.

On Monday, 20th August, the 1st and 5th Bersaglieri Brigades, with the Elba Brigade in support, had pushed east of Vrh and Kuk 611, and turned the Jelenik position. It yielded the next day, for fortunately it was held by Czech troops, and the Italians poured through the gap across the Bainsizza. For the moment it seemed as if in this section open warfare had been restored. On the morning of the 23rd the Florence and Udine Brigades attacked to the east of the Rohot glen against the height of Kobilek, while other troops advanced east of Vodice and drove the enemy into the Concha di Gargaro, thereby threatening the rear of Monte Santo. That same day, on the south, the Italians forced the saddle which separates Monte Santo from Monte San Gabriele. The garrison on the former hill was now isolated, and on the following day, the 24th, the place fell. By this day, the sixth of the battle, over 20,000 prisoners had been taken.

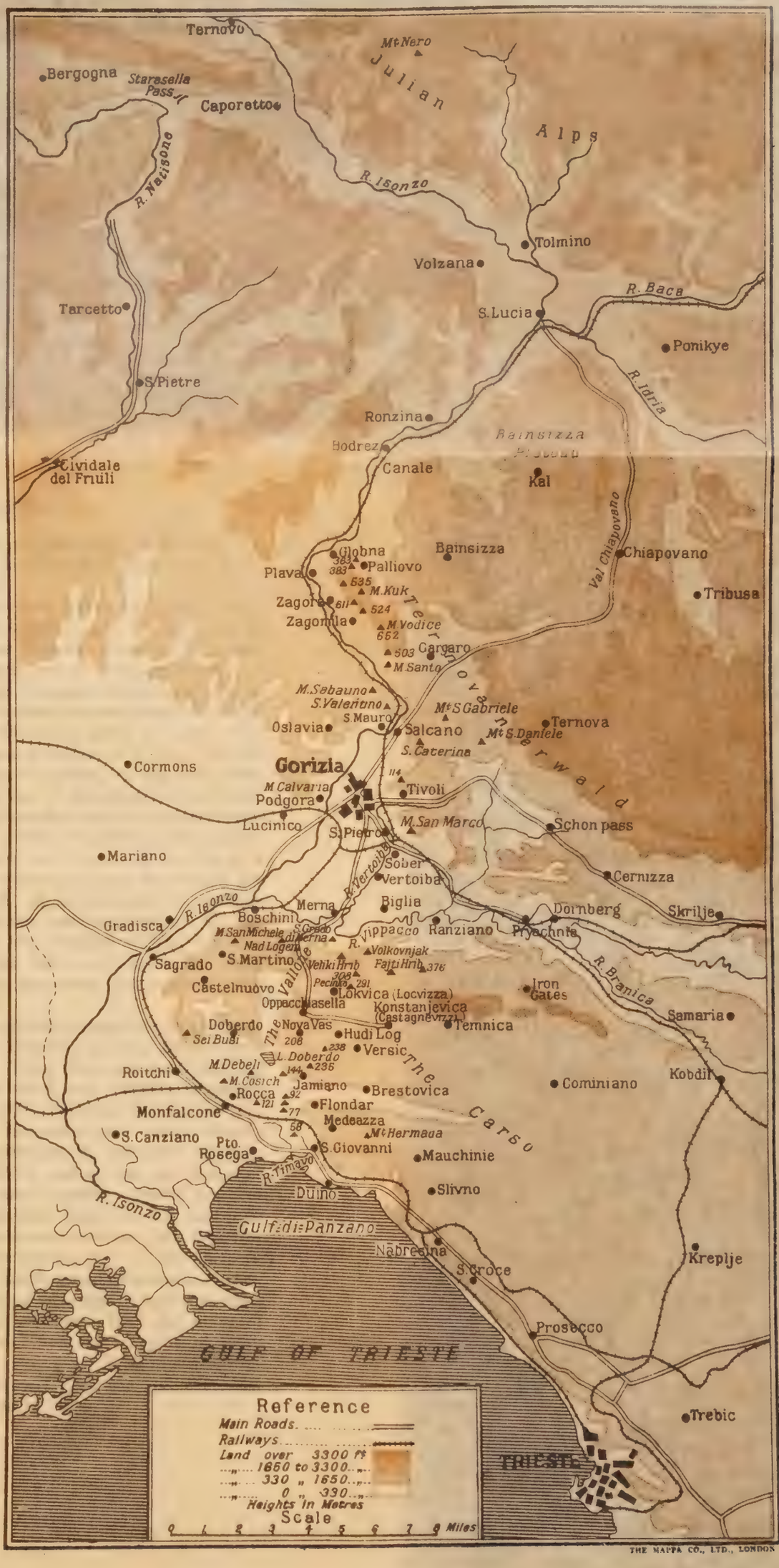
Capello was now moving freely across the Bainsizza plateau. But his task was difficult, for he had few roads; his transport had to climb the 2,000 feet of steep cliffs from the Isonzo; the weather was scorching; water was scarce, and the enemy was fighting

stubborn rearguard actions in the broken country. At the southern end the Austrians had been forced into the Chiapovano valley; but farther north the Italian advance was stayed at the hill of Volnik, some two miles west of the Chiapovano. It was inevitable that in an assault in such a terrain the Italian infantry should outrun their artillery, and the enemy was able to get off the bulk of his guns.

North of the Avscek glen there was a more serious check. General Badoglio, who in May had been responsible for the capture of Kuk and Vodice, was dispatched to take charge of the operations there; * but he found the Austrian artillery concentration so strong on the Lom plateau that even his energy could make no headway. Two months later this failure was to bear disastrous fruits. On the 30th Cadorna sent in his cavalry at the southern end of the Chiapovano valley, in the hope of forcing the northern spurs of San Gabriele. The time for cavalry, however, had passed. The war of movement had ended, and the defence had found positions on which they could stand. The first phase of the battle was over, and there was need for a pause and a readjustment while the engineers toiled at new roads. It was the same in the Carso, where during the first week the right of the Third Army had won ground above San Giovanni di Duino and Medeazza, on the slopes of Hermada, and the 23rd Corps had broken through the main Austrian system from Kostanjevica across the Brestovica valley. There the advance halted, for some of the guns and reserves of the Third Army were needed for the struggle at San Gabriele.

The second phase began on 3rd September. San Gabriele was obviously in danger. Some time before, the Italians had worked their way up its southern spurs, Santa Caterina and Hill 343. The fall of Monte Santo had given them the Sella di Dol, the saddle between the two heights, and on the last day of August they had won Hill 526 and Veliki Hrib, and pushed along the northern ridge to point 552. San Gabriele is a long ridge, 646 metres at its highest point, which falls steeply towards Gorizia and towards the east and north, but on the west drops by gentler slopes to the Isonzo. The ridge at its widest is about 800 yards, and its total length is some 2,000. The actual summit is very steep, not unlike one of the *castrol* or saucepan hills common in South Africa. The place had been made one huge fortress, honeycombed with caverns and

* He had been Capello's Chief of Staff in May, and was now in command of the 2nd Corps.



THE ISONZO AND CARSO FRONTS.

(*Facing p. 542.*)

tunnels, and it now represented a promontory in the Austrian lines, surrounded by the Italians on three sides, and linked to the main front only on the north-east.

On 4th September the place was in Cadorna's hands, except for the last few hundred yards below the summit. On the morning of that day he attacked with three columns—along the crest from Veliki Hrib, on the north-east slopes, and on the south just east of Santa Caterina. After a desperate struggle the main part of the summit was carried—a fight for a natural fortress within as narrow limits of movement as any old battle for town or castle. The enemy could not allow the situation to remain as it was. The fall of San Gabriele meant the ultimate opening of the road from Gorizia to Trieste. For ten days one of the fiercest of the lesser battles of the war was waged on those few thousand square feet of rock and dust. Thirty-one fresh Austrian battalions were thrown into the *mêlée*. The enemy forced the Italians off the top to a line just under the crest; then Cadorna's guns devastated the summit, and the Italians returned. It was a battle of appalling losses, for both defence and attack were implacable. By the middle of September the crest was roughly divided between Cadorna and Boroevitch, and the latter was entitled to claim that he had blocked the Italian movement which would have threatened his lines east of Gorizia.

On the other hand, the action of San Gabriele enabled Capello to consolidate his position on the Bainsizza plateau, which otherwise might have been precarious. There new roads were made for guns and supplies, water was provided, and trenches perfected, while every spare Austrian soldier was being used at San Gabriele. At the close of the month two successful local actions greatly improved the line. On 28th September an awkward Austrian position was captured on Veliki Hrib, and on the 29th troops of the Venice and Tortona Brigades made a useful advance south of Podlaka and Madoni at the south-east corner of the Bainsizza. During September heavy Austrian counter-strokes were launched on the Carso between Kostanjevica and the sea. In the northern part the 23rd Corps, assisted by a British group of heavy howitzers, beat off all attacks; but in the south the Italian right was compelled on 5th September once again to retire from the slopes of Hermada, and San Giovanni di Duino was lost. The Third Army did not attempt to recover the ground, for a great movement on Hermada was part of Cadorna's autumn plan when the campaign of the Second Army should be finished.

But by the middle of September the Italian Commander-in-Chief had reluctantly come to the conclusion that he must relinquish those further plans. In a month's continuous battles he had achieved a very real success. He had taken well over 30,000 prisoners and large quantities of guns and *matériel*. The fighting of his men had been heroic beyond all praise, and San Gabriele must rank in history with those feats of arms which reveal the extreme tenacity of the human spirit. But he had paid a heavy price in his 155,000 casualties, though the enemy had lost correspondingly. His troops, too, suffered much from sickness, which brought the total casualties for the whole summer up to nearly three-quarters of a million. He was still far too weak in artillery, in spite of loans from the Allies, and he saw no way of procuring the necessary strength. Moreover, the position which he had gained on the Bainsizza was not satisfactory as a jumping-off ground. The centre was too much in advance of the flanks. The Austrian position on the Lom and at Tolmino was a menace which must be removed before a new advance was practicable, and its removal meant an operation for which he had not the strength. The Italian Julian front had become a salient within a salient. Above all, his losses had compelled him to fill up his units with new drafts which had not yet been tested. The flower of his armies had suffered in the long summer battles, and he dared not risk a new campaign until he was once more certain of his men.

Accordingly, on 18th September, he cancelled all arrangements for a further offensive, and informed the Allies that his main operations were at an end. The Allies acquiesced, but it would appear that they did not realize the full meaning of Cadorna's decision. He understood, with a completeness not possible as yet to the French and British staffs, the disastrous possibilities involved in the defection of Russia. The Italian front, it was assumed by them, would relapse into the comparative quiet which had hitherto attended the close of Cadorna's offensives. Eleven of the sixteen British batteries were withdrawn, and certain French guns, now on their way, were countermanded before they had been once in action. Her allies did not realize that the forces of Italy had fought themselves, as the phrase goes, to a standstill, and that the nation behind them, scared by the vast losses and at the mercy of treacherous propaganda, was in no position to aid in their recuperation. Cadorna's summary methods of discipline—up to date he had dismissed 217 generals, 255 full colonels, and 335 battalion commanders—had filled the armies with officers unknown to their men. The

strategic position on the Isonzo was dangerous at the best, and its peril was centupled by the weariness and discontent of the Italian troops and the new plans of the enemy. Boroevitch had also been fought to a standstill. In spite of his reserves from Galicia the Bainsizza and San Gabriele had shaken his strength to its foundations, and he informed his Government that he could not resist a twelfth Isonzo battle. Accordingly Germany agreed to stiffen his line with German troops, and to ease the position by an attack on the grand scale.* Of this coming offensive the Italian Headquarters were fully informed; they could even guess with reasonable confidence its locality; but they hesitated about how to meet it. Capello would have anticipated it by an Italian attack; the alternative was to do as the Germans did in the West in March, and fall back to an invincible position. But, since the Trentino defences had been allowed to decay, such a retirement must be drastic, and would involve the giving up of all the ground won since May 1915. Cadorna delayed and was lost. He was still considering his policy when the avalanche overtook him.

* Ludendorff's *My War Memories* (Eng. trans.), II., p. 482.

CHAPTER LXXXI.

THE THIRD YEAR OF WAR: THE CHANGE IN THE STRATEGIC POSITION.

June 28, 1916–*June* 28, 1917.

The "Mathematical Certainty" of 1917—The New Factor—Tactical Developments—Landing of first American Troops—The Year at Sea—Gravity of Submarine Peril—America sends Destroyers—Revision of War Aims—Economic Position of the Belligerents—A New Europe.

In the present chapter we have to consider a new phase of the strategic position in sharp contrast to those which preceded it. The first year of war closed in a general obscurity, from which no deduction was possible. With the second the factors seemed to have become clear and static, and the problems to be slowly moving towards solution. But at the close of the third year the outlines were blurred again. What had seemed granite rock had crumbled into sand. Accepted metaphors, such as "Germany a beleaguered fortress," were losing their relevance, and postulates, like the Allied command of the sea and the enemy war on two fronts, were clamouring for revision. The third anniversary of the Serajevo tragedy saw a dramatic change in the position of the belligerents.

At the end of June 1916 the Germans in the West had exhausted their capacity for the offensive, and the long Allied battle-line from the North Sea to the Adriatic was about to move forward. While Brussilov was pressing hard in Volhynia and Galicia and the Bukovina, the Battle of the Somme began, and by the close of the year it had effected its main purpose. We have already seen in detail the results of that great fight, which was up to date the most sustained effort of the campaign. It forced the enemy from positions which he thought impregnable, gravely depleted his man-power, dislocated his staff-work, and disorganized his whole military machine. It compelled him to make superhuman efforts to increase his forces, and to construct a new defensive position

to be the bulwark of his French and Belgian occupations. All along the Western front the Allies were successful. At Verdun, before the close of 1916, Nivelle, by shattering counter-strokes, had won back what Germany had gained in the spring and summer. Cadorna had taken Gorizia, and had pushed well into the Carso fastnesses. On the Russian front Brussilov, after routing three Austrian armies, had been stayed before Halicz in September; and during the autumn and early winter Mackensen and Falkenhayn had overrun the Dobrudja and Wallachia, taken Bucharest, and driven the Rumanians to the line of the Sereth. But this victory, won against a small and ill-equipped nation, was the solitary success of the Central Powers. On all the main battle-grounds they had been unmistakably beaten in the field.

To the most conservative observer at the beginning of 1917 it seemed almost a matter of mathematical certainty that during that year the Teutonic Alliance must suffer the final military defeat which would mean the end of the war. No larger effort would be required from Russia than Brussilov's attack of 1916; let that be repeated, and the Western Allies would do the rest. The Allied plan was a great combined advance as soon as the weather permitted, for an attack in spring would leave the whole summer and autumn in which to reap the fruits. The enemy must be driven back on his Siegfried Line during the first months of the year, and then must come the combined blow on the pivots of his last defences. Russia, now well supplied with munitions, would take the field at the first chance, and Cadorna would press forward against Trieste. In the Balkans Sarrail would engage the two Bulgarian armies, and even if he could not break them, he could pin them down and ease Rumania's case. In the East Yudenitch would press south from the Caucasus, and the British armies of Syria and Mesopotamia would press northward, and between them the Turkish forces would be hemmed in and the campaign in that area brought to a decision. On paper the scheme seemed perfect; as far as human intelligence could judge, it was feasible; but in war there may suddenly appear a new and unlooked-for factor which shatters the best-laid plan.

That new factor was the Russian Revolution. In April 1917, when the offensive was due to start, it was still a doubtful quantity, but some consequences were at once apparent. The disorganization of the Russian armies prevented Yudenitch's movement from the Caucasus. It enabled limited German reinforcements to be sent westward against France and Britain. It gave much-tried Austria

a breathing-space, and allowed her to strengthen her Isonzo and Carso fronts. Above all, it introduced uncertainty, which to a strategic plan is as grit in the bearings of a machine. A new vague element had appeared, which, like the addition of some ingredient to a chemical combination, altered subtly and radically all the original components. The great spring offensive miscarried, though many local victories were won. The pivots of the Siegfried Line were not broken. The contemplated " drive " of the Turkish armies in the East did not succeed. Partly this was due to elements of weakness in the Allied armies, to the comparative failure of Nivelle on the Aisne, and to the confused methods of Sarrail at Salonika. Partly it was due to weather, which is beyond the authority of any General Staff. But the main cause was the increased strength of the enemy caused by the defection of Russia from the battle-line.

At the close of June 1917 the position of the Allies had many elements of strength. During the preceding year France and Britain had captured from the German armies 165,000 rank and file, 3,500 officers, nearly a thousand guns, and some 3,000 lesser pieces. They had won almost all the chief observation posts of the enemy in the West—the Bapaume ridge, the Chemin des Dames, the Moronvillers hills, Vimy and Messines. Since the blow on the Siegfried pivots had failed, Sir Douglas Haig was making ready another plan, and by his victory at Messines on 7th June, presently to be related, had cleared his flanks for the new movement. Italy had won substantial victories on the Isonzo heights and on the Carso. Though the Balkan attack had miscarried, Venizelos was now in power in Greece, and the danger to the rear of the Salonika army had gone. Sir Archibald Murray had been checked at Gaza, but Sir Stanley Maude had taken Bagdad, and had pushed his front well to the north and east of that city. America had entered the war, and was preparing with all her might to play an adequate part. Finally, there were rumours that Russia was about to take the offensive ; and those who did not realize the complete chaos of that country talked wisely of what might be accomplished by a revolutionary army, where each soldier fought under the inspiration of the new wine of liberty.

The situation had, therefore, hopeful aspects, but to the careful observer it seemed that that hope did not rest on reasoned calculations. The harsh fact was that the great plan of 1917, of which the Somme and indeed all the Allied fighting and preparation since 1915 had been the logical preliminaries, had proved impossible.

New plans could be made, but they would not be the same. For the elements were no longer calculable. By the failure of one great partner the old military cohesion of the Alliance had gone. Something might still be hoped for from Russia, but nothing could be taken for granted. The beleaguering forces which had sat for three years round the German citadel were wavering and straggling on the East. The war on two fronts, which had been Germany's great handicap, looked as if it might change presently to a war on a single front. Whatever victories might be won during the remainder of 1917, it was now clear that the decisive blow could not be delivered. The Teutonic Alliance, just when it was beginning to crumble, had been given a new tenure of life.

The year had been fruitful in tactical developments. The Somme saw the principle of limited objectives first put methodically into practice—a principle which led to brilliant success at the winter battles of Verdun, at Arras, and most notably at Messines, and in regard to which Nivelle's attack at the Aisne was the exception that proved the rule. It saw, too, a valuable advance in artillery tactics in the shape of the Allied device of the "creeping barrage." On the enemy side the chief novelty was the use of "shock-troops" for the counter-attack. In the main battle area he had been continuously on the defensive, and his method had been to hold his front line lightly, and rely on a massed counter-attack before the offensive had secured its ground. This was for the normal sector, but in the Siegfried Line he trusted to the immense strength of his positions and his endless well-placed machine guns to prevent any loss of ground. Neither mode of defence wholly succeeded. By the end of June he had already lost seven miles of the Siegfried Line; and on the rest of the battlefield he had, with the solitary exception of Fresnoy, failed to win back any ground by his counter-attacks. But this failure did not invalidate his tactical scheme. He was playing for time, husbanding his man-power, and dragging out the contest till his submarine campaign should bring Britain to her knees. He was successful in so far that he was able to stave off a decisive blow, and he was busy perfecting other devices which were to give his opponents serious food for thought later in the year. Notably he was elaborating his method of defence in depth, and feeling his way towards the use of "shock-troops," not for the counter-stroke only, but for a surprise offensive on the largest scale. The defensive of the German High Command was no supine or unintelligent thing.

On one side the enemy showed remarkable energy. Before the close of the Somme he had realized his weakness in the air, and had appointed General von Höppner, the Chief of Staff of Otto von Below's VI. Army, to control all his flying service. The result was a striking advance in effectiveness. Before Arras, indeed, he was beaten from the field, but only at the cost of a heavy Allied sacrifice. Höppner perfected new types of battle planes, notably the two Albatrosses; he was the chief promoter of the Gotha bomb-carrier, which was soon to become a familiar name in England; he improved the *personnel* of the service; he concentrated on the production of high-powered engines; and he greatly increased the output of the standardized factories. The command of the air, as has already been noted, could never be an absolute thing. On the whole, the Allies had the superiority; but there were long spells when the battle was drawn, and at moments the honours seemed to be with the other side. It was a ceaseless struggle both for the airmen at the front and for the factories at home, and a single error in foresight or a single strike of workmen might incline the wavering balance against the side responsible for it.

But developments in tactics and *matériel* were as yet of secondary importance compared with the great question of man-power. We have seen the difficulties of the Central Powers up to the spring of 1917, when the Russian Revolution gave them a new lease of life. All the combatants were suffering from the depletion of their ranks. France had reached her maximum at an earlier stage, and was naturally anxious to conserve her remaining resources. She was holding roughly two-thirds of the Western front; but as the main operations were in the British section, the enemy's strength per mile against the latter was more than double his strength per mile against the French. It was clear that a further increase could only come from Britain, whose exhaustion was conspicuously less than that of her neighbour. But for Britain the problem of reserves was far from easy, for she could not give undivided attention to the question of men for the front, since she was the chief munitioner of all the Allies. She had some two and a quarter million men engaged in shipbuilding, munitions, and kindred work; she had well over five millions under arms, of whom nearly three and a quarter millions were in expeditionary forces, and of these nearly two and a quarter millions in France and Flanders. Her losses had not been on the French scale, but her non-combatant commitments were far greater. Hence for her the balance must be most delicately hung. More men must be got to face the German

divisions released from the East, for each month of the war had made it clearer that no decision could be won without a crushing numerical superiority. Moreover, these men must be ready in time, so that they could be fully trained before entering the line; for every dispatch of Sir Douglas Haig insisted upon the folly of flinging raw troops into a modern battle. But the reinforcements came slowly. In the spring of 1917 Sir William Robertson, in a public speech, asked for half a million new levies by July. He did not get them, for the conflicting claims could not be balanced. The country passed through acute phases of opinion, in which the building of new tonnage, the production of food supplies at home, the construction of a vast airplane programme, seemed successively the major needs. But vital as these were, the great permanent demand was numbers for the fighting line. It was idle to put a limit to the number of men required for the army. Everybody was needed who could conceivably be spared from vital industries. For without a great preponderance of numbers on the front the most ample munitionment carried by the most impregnable mercantile navy could not give victory.

It was to this problem especially that America's entry into the war seemed to provide an answer. Her measures were instant and comprehensive, and from the day of the declaration of war she flung herself whole-heartedly into the work of preparation. Her resources were enormous, for within a few years it was calculated that she could put fifteen millions of men into the line and provide some hundreds of thousand millions sterling of money. But she had to go through the preliminaries which her allies had faced two years earlier, and at this stage of the contest, if her assistance was to be effective, it must be furiously speeded up. America's effort must be made against time. Her first step was to introduce compulsory service under a system of selective conscription. The measure was passed by Congress on 28th April, and in five months a million and a half soldiers were in training. The regular army was brought up to its full strength of 400,000 by voluntary enlistment; the National Guard was brought up to half a million; the ballot for conscripts gave some 700,000. Vast camps sprang up throughout the country like mushrooms in a night. The mobilization of America for war was hurried on in all other branches of national effort. More than 20,000 million dollars was voted, of which 7,000 millions were loans to America's allies. The immense sum of £128,000,000 was set aside for airplane contracts. A huge programme of merchant shipbuilding was entered

upon by means of the Emergency Fleet Corporation, which was soon to complete an ocean-going merchantman in seventy days. The President was given power to assist the Allied blockade by putting an embargo on certain exports to neutral countries, and he did not let the weapon rust. Controllers of food and the other chief commodities were appointed, as in Britain. Treason and espionage were put down with that high hand which can only be used by a democracy sure of itself.

Monday, 25th June, was an eventful day, for it saw the landing of the first units of American troops in France. They were only forerunners, to prepare the way for those who should follow; for there were few troops as yet available for the field, and the small regular army had to be distributed as stiffening among the new divisions. The American Commander-in-Chief was Major-General Pershing, who had been a conspicuous figure in the Spanish war and on the Mexican frontier—a man still in early middle life, with many years of practical campaigning behind him. The old American army had been small, but its officers had followed the life for the love of it, and were to a high degree professional experts. For its size, the staff was probably equal to any in the world. Those who watched the first American soldiers on the continent of Europe—grave young men, with lean, shaven faces, a quick, springy walk, and a superb bodily fitness—found their memories returning to Gettysburg and the Wilderness, where the same stock had shown an endurance and heroism not surpassed in the history of mankind. And they were disposed to agree with the observer who remarked that it had taken a long time to get America into the war, but that it would take much longer to get her out.

The year in naval warfare had been inconspicuous so far as above-water actions were concerned. The essay of Jutland was not repeated. British battleships and the battle cruisers lay idle in harbour, or patrolled seas where there was no sign of the enemy. There was, indeed, much sporadic raiding. During the first months of 1917 the *Seeadler* repeated in the South Atlantic the exploits of the *Moewe* the previous year; the German flotillas from Zeebrugge and Ostend were busy about the British shores. On 22nd January Commander Tyrwhitt's forces met an enemy destroyer division off the Dutch coast, and sank one vessel and scattered the rest. Then followed a series of German raids on the Kent and Suffolk coasts, and the bombardment of the much-tried little seaport towns. In April the British counter-attacked with some success,

and in a brilliant action off Dover, on the night of 20th April, the *Broke*, commanded by Commander Evans, the Antarctic explorer, and the *Swift*, Commander Peck, engaged five or six vessels, and sank at least two of them. On 5th June the Dover patrol bombarded Ostend so effectually as to destroy most of the workshops and for a time make the harbour untenable; while Tyrwhitt's Harwich flotilla engaged six destroyers, and sank one and severely damaged another. It was very clear that these Belgian bases were a perpetual menace to our shores and to the safety of the Allied trade. Not only did they serve as the home of the aircraft which were beginning to make bold assaults upon England, but they were the source of the raiding flotillas and the harbour of all the smaller submarines. The mind of the High Command in the field was more and more turning towards the smoking out of this nest of mischief by a land attack, as at once the best offensive and defensive possible.

But if the year was barren of fleet actions, it was none the less destined to form an epoch in naval history, for the early weeks of 1917 saw the submarine become the most potent single weapon of war. We have seen in earlier chapters how, during the summer and autumn of 1916, the range of Germany's under-water craft had been extended and their numbers largely increased. So far she had been restrained, not by considerations of decency or of international law, but solely by the fear of bringing America into the contest. Now, largely as the result of the Somme, she had made up her mind that at all costs she must deal a final blow to her main enemy if she were to avoid a general defeat. She believed that the economic condition of Britain was very grave, and that by a mighty effort she might force starvation upon that people, cripple their military effort, and bring them to their senses. She had reasoned out the matter carefully, and was confident of her conclusions. She ran a desperate risk, but the stakes were worth it. America might declare war; but that price would not be too high to pay for the destruction of Britain as a fighting force, and perhaps as a coherent state. When the German Government yielded to the policy of the General Staff, it was because they believed that they were gambling on a certainty.

On 31st January Germany announced the danger zone to the world. All the waters in a wide radius round Britain, France, and Italy, as well as in the Eastern Mediterranean, were declared to be blockaded areas. A narrow lane was left at first for shipping to Greece. The ensuing campaign was waged in deadly earnest.

The weekly tables which the British Admiralty issued as from 25th February showed a heavy and growing destruction of British and Allied tonnage. During the month of April we lost some 550,000 tons gross of shipping,* and there were those who, looking at the brilliant Arras offensive, declared that the problem for Germany was to defeat Britain at sea before the British army could win on land. On 21st February Admiral von Capelle told the Reichstag that the expectations attached to the U-boat campaign by the German people had been fully justified by results. The end of April was popularly fixed as the limit of British endurance under this new attack; then it was postponed to August; but May passed and August came, and there was no sign of yielding. To that extent Germany's gamble failed. It brought in America against her, but it was very far from forcing Britain to sue for peace. The military stores carried overseas to the fighting fronts were in September 1917 more than twice what they had been in January.

Nevertheless, the situation was sufficiently grave. From the beginning of the war till February 1, 1917, we had lost some four and a half million tons to the enemy; we lost approximately that amount in the first seven months of the new submarine warfare. At this rate the Allied tonnage would presently be reduced to a point which would forbid not only the decent provisioning of the civilian peoples at home, but the maintenance of the armies at the fighting fronts. To meet the menace, five lines of policy must be pursued concurrently. All unnecessary imports from overseas must be firmly checked. Home production, both of food and of raw materials such as ores and timber, must be immensely increased. New tonnage must be built, or borrowed where it could be had. Existing merchant shipping must be protected as far as possible by escorts and by the organization of convoys. Finally, a truceless war must be waged against the U-boats, in the hope that the point would be reached when we could sink them faster than Germany could build them.

British statesmen made earnest appeals to their countrymen, and met with a willing response. By the early summer of 1917 Great Britain had grown into one vast market garden, and every

* In one fortnight 122 ocean-going vessels were lost—a rate of 25 per cent. in this class. If neutral shipping was included the April losses were nearly 900,000 tons. The statistics will be found in J. A. Salter's *Allied Shipping Control*, 1921. *Cf.* Admiral Sims: "Could Germany have had 50 submarines constantly at work on the great shipping routes in the winter and spring of 1917—before we had learned how to handle the situation—nothing could have prevented her from winning the war."—*The Victory at Sea*, p. 21.

type of citizen had become an amateur food-producer. There were periodic shortages of certain articles of diet, and the supply of certain imported materials, such as pulp for paper-making, steadily declined. But on the whole the British people showed an adaptability in the crisis with which their best friends had scarcely credited them. The shipbuilding programmes were enlarged and speeded up. During peace time Britain had produced some two millions of new tonnage a year. In 1915 this figure fell to 688,000; in 1916 to 538,000. During the first six months of 1917 the tonnage built was 484,000, and in his speech of 16th August the Prime Minister told the House of Commons that the total new tonnage built at home and acquired from abroad during the year would be 1,900,000. When we consider that this was almost the amount of peace construction, and reflect on the depletion and diversion of British man-power, the achievement must seem highly creditable. The convoy system, opposed at the start by the whole merchant service, was successful, and in the Atlantic presently gave good results.* As for our offensive against the submarine, it proceeded slowly but surely, by a multitude of devices the tale of which cannot be told in this place. Our system of naval intelligence was perfected, and our aircraft became deadly weapons both for the detection and destruction of the German craft. The enemy losses increased slightly during the first quarter of the year; during the second quarter they rose more sharply; and after June the curve mounted steeply. It must be realized that our problem both of defence and offence was far more difficult than when submarine attacks were confined to the Narrow Seas. It was possible to defend our channels and estuaries by a dozen methods which could not be used against craft operating in the wide ocean.

The main problem for the Allies during the first year of war was men for the field; it was munitions during the second, and tonnage in the third. The deadly enemy offensive was now on the sea. This problem affected all the Allies; but it bore most heavily on Britain, partly because of her large necessary import trade, partly because of her position as universal provider. It was beyond her power to solve it by the immediate creation of new tonnage to replace losses, since, in building up her armies and munition factories, she had drawn too largely on her strength for any large effort in a new direction. The solution lay with America, and in a special degree it was America's contribution to the conduct

* The first convoy of slow ships from Gibraltar arrived safely on 20th May. Next day the system was officially adopted for all merchant shipping.

of the war. It was Germany's submarine policy which had brought the United States into the struggle, and the daily record of cold-blooded barbarities was the most potent appeal to her citizens to wage war in earnest. Germany conducted her campaign without pity, and the torpedoing of hospital ships like the *Gloucester Castle*, the *Dover Castle*, the *Lanfranc*, and the *Donegal* did more, perhaps, to rouse American feeling than the not less barbarous treatment of humble merchantmen. From the beginning America realized her responsibility in this matter, but she had a long way to travel before she could carry policy into deeds; for there was some fumbling over the question at the start, and needless delay in the first stages of preparation. If she could produce six million tons of new shipping a year the problem was solved, even if there was no decline in the scale of German successes. The task was well within her power, for it required only a tenth of her annual output of steel and a mere fraction of her great labour reserves. It was in a peculiar sense her own problem, for unless she provided the ships her armies could never make war in Europe. Without the new tonnage her admirable military activity was merely beating the air.

Meantime the Navy was the first part of America's fighting force to take the field beside her Allies. On 4th May a squadron of American destroyers arrived at Queenstown, and a second followed a fortnight later. The vessels were admirable in construction, and their officers and crews were true seamen, who earned at once the respect of their British colleagues. In June, when Admiral Sir Lewis Bayly, commanding on the Irish coast, went on leave, Admiral W. S. Sims took his place, and the Stars and Stripes floated for the first time in history from a British headquarters. Such was the start of a very splendid brotherhood in arms. The main weapon against the submarine was the destroyer, but more than half the British destroyers were retained with the Grand Fleet, and others were needed for the Mediterranean. America's first task was, therefore, to supply the necessary craft for submarine-chasing and convoy work. The second, which began the following year, was the construction of a great mine barrage over the 250 miles of sea between Norway and the north of Scotland.

It was not to be expected that the new and startling developments of naval war should leave the administration of the British Admiralty unchanged. We have seen that by the close of 1916 Sir Edward Carson had become First Lord, and Sir John Jellicoe First Sea Lord. Presently Sir Eric Geddes, the Director-General of Military Transportation, was brought in as Controller of the

Navy—the revival of an historic office which gave him the supervision of new construction. In June there was a further readjustment, and in July Sir Edward Carson entered the War Cabinet as Minister without portfolio, and Sir Eric Geddes succeeded him as First Lord. The functions of the Board of Admiralty were divided into " operations " and " maintenance," and the members were grouped into two committees accordingly. The operations committee was made up of the First Sea Lord and those officers responsible for the details of strategy; the maintenance committee consisted of the officers responsible for *personnel*, *matériel*, supplies, construction, and finance. The effect of the change was threefold. It brought into Admiralty administration men from the fleets who had recent fighting experience and were still young. It separated the two functions of command and supply, which required different talents and training. Above all, it made possible a real Naval Staff, a thinking department which had laid upon it the duty of deducing the logical lessons from the new facts of sea warfare, and working out future plans on a basis of accurate knowledge. Much naval theory had gone into the melting-pot, and the creeds of 1914 had to be drastically revised. It stood to reason that the younger men, who had themselves been forced to grapple in bitter earnest with the new imperious needs, should be largely used to frame the tactics and strategy of reply.

Important as were the naval developments, the most significant events of the year had been in the sphere of politics. France and Italy had not changed conspicuously the *personnel* of their civil Governments, save that in March M. Ribot had succeeded M. Briand in France as Prime Minister. In Germany, in June 1917 Bethmann-Hollweg still held—though with a weakening hand—the reins of power. But in Britain a radically new Government had appeared, and in Russia a new world. Everywhere the atmosphere had become different. The half-forgotten general purposes and the immediate strategical aims, which had filled men's minds in the early years of war, were giving place to a craving for first principles, and, on Germany's part, to a feverish diplomacy based on this new instinct. The movement had begun with the Emperor's offer of peace terms in December 1916; for, though the offer had been summarily rejected by the Allies, it had set a ferment working in the mind of all the world. The tremendous events of the spring in Petrograd and the entry of America into the struggle changed the outlook of every belligerent people. Henceforth not the

methods but the aims of the war became the common subject of speculation and controversy. Offensives ceased to be military only, and became political, and the idealist and the idealogue emerged from their closets.

The development was a salutary one, and, as we shall see, it had an immense and immediate effect upon every phase of the campaign. It both cleared and narrowed the issues between the combatants. The Allies had entered on the contest with a very simple and honourable conception of the goal they strove for, but by the spring of 1917 all had grown a little hazy as to their precise objective. Each of them had one primary aim—to crush finally, not the German people or the German state, but that evil thing which had become dominant there, and which made the world unsafe for peace or liberty. Once that thing were crushed, there was little need for talk about guarantees, for the main peril would have gone. Until it was crushed, no guarantee which the wit of man could devise would safeguard civilization. But there were a number of secondary purposes which each of the Allies held, and which they were apt to talk of as conditions of peace. In these purposes were not included the relinquishment by Germany of the territories occupied, and the restitution of Belgium and Serbia; such were not terms of peace, but the necessary pre-conditions without which no discussion of peace was possible. By secondary purposes were meant the various territorial adjustments spoken of in connection with France and Italy, and such matters as the much-canvassed economic restrictions on the Central Powers. These were not primary aims: they were matters of machinery which were of value only in so far as they gave effect to the primary aim. It was possible to be convinced on the main issue, and yet to be doubtful about the merit of more than one of the secondary aims. The latter were for the most part safeguards and guarantees, and if the primary aim were forgotten and negotiations were attempted on their basis, then the most rigid and excessive guarantees must be sought to give security. But if the primary aim was accomplished, all the secondary aims took on a new complexion.

There was some perception of this truth in two phrases which were variously interpreted—the demand of the Russian revolutionaries for "no indemnities and no annexations," and President Wilson's famous phrase, "Peace without victory." The Allies' object in the war was to make a world where law, not force, should rule, and where the smallest people should be secure in peace and freedom. It was not to redistribute territory, except in so far as

that was necessary to the main end. Every secondary aim must therefore be tested by the main purpose. "Peace without victory" was a true formula, if by it was meant that the Allies did not want a victory which would leave a lasting sense of bitterness and injustice, and so defeat their chief aim. "No annexations or indemnities" was also a just formula, if annexations were considered as a spoil of conquest and not as contributing to the main purpose. But in another sense no peace could come without victory—final victory over a perverted Prussianism; and annexations and indemnities might be essential if they were a logical part of the general purpose of pacification.

Now, America had entered into the war without any interest in secondary aims. She knew that the point was not whether this or that territorial change should be made, but that the mischief should be rooted out of Germany and the world. To say that France fought for Alsace-Lorraine and Italy for Trieste and the Trentino, or Britain for the safety of India, was to adopt a formula too narrow for the facts. America's appearance compelled all the Allies to revise their notions and return to the first things. It helped them to distinguish between method and purpose, between machinery and design. It was the duty of the whole Alliance to test everything by a single question: Would it help towards that lasting peace and that cleaner and better world which they fought to create?

The appearance of Bolshevism in Russia, which denied all the axioms of Western liberalism, was the reason of another speculative confusion that about this period became observable in the minds of the Allies. Nationalism had been the first Allied oriflamme, and since the Bolshevists scouted nationalism, the Allies were inclined to deify it unwisely. The phrase "self-determination" * became popular in statements of war aims—a fatal phrase, for it tended to decry the co-ordinating union of peoples and defend a chaos of feeble statelets, economically weak and politically unstable. Self-determination implies a self to determine, a certain degree of self-conscious nationality before independence is desirable. To allow any racial oddment to start house on its own account would produce not freedom but anarchy, and undo the long work of civilization. As against this false particularism, which was to produce bitter fruits in the Old World, America might be looked

* The phrase is the German *Selbstbestimmungsrecht*, first used in the 1848 revolution. Its modern use dates from the Zimmerwald Conference. President Wilson never committed himself to the particular expression.

to to champion the true nationalism, for half a century before she had given her best blood to ensure its triumph.

Moreover, America emphasized and brought into the foreground the greatest of the methods for the realization of the Allied purpose. There were many at the time who were inclined to dismiss all questions of a League of Nations and an international peace-making authority as academic and irrelevant. This was not the view of President Wilson and the American people, nor was it the view of the Allied leaders. If there was any horizon beyond the battle-smoke, the question of international right and an adequate machinery to enforce it was the most fundamental which the Allies could consider. It was far more practical than discussions about where certain new border-lines should run—questions which at this stage of the war no one had the data to settle. To belittle the importance of what was coming to be called "internationalism" was to obscure one of the most vital aspects of the common purpose. No speech of the year so moved the British nation as that delivered by General Smuts in May at the dinner given in his honour by both Houses of Parliament, when he expounded the doctrine of the British Empire as historically the first instalment of a greater League—"the only system in history in which a large number of nations has been living in unity."

But with the true internationalism came the false—the fanatical creed which would have destroyed all the loyalties and sanctions of patriotism, and put in their place a materialistic absorption in class interests. War, which with most men intensifies local affection and national devotion, has with those of a certain type the effect of dissipating the homely intimacies of race and country and substituting for them a creed of class selfishness and dogmatic abstractions. Such men are the intellectual outlaws of society. They may be honest, able, and brave, but they are inhuman; and though they can destroy they can never build, for enduring institutions must be founded on human nature. Nevertheless in the long strain of war there come moments when such dogmas have a fatal appeal, and in the first half of 1917 they gained ground among the *déracinés* of all countries. They spread like wildfire in Russia, where they found conditions naturally favourable; they were preached by the remnants of the old *Internationale* in Switzerland, Holland, and Scandinavia; they were welcomed by the left wing of French socialism, and by the same group in Italy; while in Britain they found adherents in the Independent Labour Party, as well as among the handful of professional wreckers who

are always abroad in any great industrial society. The true internationalism includes nationalism, and provides a safeguard for nationalities. These men were the foes of all national units, and were, consciously or unconsciously, the opponents of the war. They tended always to become apologists for Germany, and spiritually they had more kinship with the unfeatured universalism of German autocracy than with the rich and varied liberties of Western civilization.

It was necessary for all the belligerents to take account of this new attitude of mind. The Allies were gradually compelled to emphasize the genuine internationalism of their aims, though their statesmen were slow in recognizing the necessity. Germany after her fashion, as we shall see later, turned the movement to her own purpose. Meantime, in his speech at Glasgow on 29th June, the British Prime Minister, following President Wilson, put the issue in a new form. The menace of Prussianism could be got rid of in two ways—either by a crushing field victory, or by the revolt of the German people themselves against the false gods which they had worshipped. In both cases the result would be the same—the degradation of a heresy in the eyes of those who had pinned their faith to it. "We shall enter," said Mr. Lloyd George, "into negotiations with a free Government in Germany with a different attitude of mind, a different temper, a different spirit, with less suspicion, with more confidence, than we should with a sort which we knew to be dominated by the aggressive and arrogant spirit of Prussian militarism. The Allied Governments would, in my judgment, be acting wisely if they drew that distinction in their general attitude towards the discussion of the terms of peace." Such an appeal was clearly on delicate ground. If unwisely phrased, it might appear to be an interference with the domestic concerns of Germany, which would rally her people to a more vigorous resistance. But beyond doubt, as thus delivered, it met with a response from certain powerful elements among the Central Powers; and, as we shall see in a later chapter, their political tactics were directed towards a democratization of their government which should have the maximum of show and the minimum of substance, and the preaching of a version of internationalism which came easy to men who had small regard for any nationalism but their own.

In June 1917, at the end of the third year of war, the attitude of the Central Powers—or, more correctly, that of Germany, their master—towards war aims showed a decline in the unanimity

which had marked it during the earlier stages of the campaign. So far Germany had made no explicit public statement of her demands. In his speech to the Reichstag on 15th May the Imperial Chancellor refused to disclose his peace terms. In the absence of official evidence Germany's war aims could only be gathered from the utterances of her press and public men, and they tended to wide divergency among themselves. But on one point it may be said that all were unanimous. Any settlement must recognize that the Central Powers had not been defeated. There must be no net loss in territory or revenues as compared with the position in August 1914. On this matter the issue with the Allies was abundantly clear.

The great majority of the German people would have put it otherwise. They claimed that Germany had been victorious, and that peace must bring to her a net gain. Only the Minority Socialists and a small section of the Majority were prepared as yet to accept a peace on the *status quo ante* basis. There was great difference of opinion as to what the gains should be, and the difference was determined by the various views held of Germany's true interests. We may distinguish five main war aims. In the first two years of war most Germans had held all the five, but after Verdun and the Somme had taught moderation the various schools were inclined to concentrate on one of the batch. The first, which was the creed of the Pan-Germans and the extreme annexationists, included the " freedom of the seas "—by which they meant the increase of German sea-power to a level with Britain's ; the annexation of the Belgian coast as well as of sundry French Channel ports ; the annexation of the Briey mining district and frontier fortresses like Longwy. The second was the Mittel-Europa school of Naumann, which sought the creation of a Central European *bloc* of states, militarily, politically, and economically united. The third, led chiefly by Paul Rohrbach, had for its prime aim the control of the Ottoman Empire and the extension of Germany's sphere of influence to the Persian Gulf. The fourth, inspired by Delbrück and Solf, preached a German colonial empire, especially in Africa. The fifth demanded large annexations of Russian soil in Courland and Lithuania, so that by agricultural settlement there should be an expansion not only of German power but of the German people.

Few now held all five aims, though many combined several in their creeds. The Pan-German was critical of Mittel-Europa, and men like Delbrück were strongly opposed to annexation in the

West. But all, even the most modest, sought some solid gain on the balance for Germany, and were thus in hopeless conflict with the views of the Allies. All, too—even the most extravagant—were encouraged by the German Government with a view to a margin for future bargaining. Nevertheless there was serious disquiet even among those who planned out most hopefully the scheme of Germany's gains. To the General Staff the *débâcle* of Russia had come as a godsend to help them to resist the deadly pressure in the West. It enabled them to think once again in terms of an offensive on land, though they still looked to the submarine campaign to weaken Britain's effort and to strangle America's at birth. But the ferment in the East was not without its perils. The disease of revolution might spread into their own decorous sheepfold, and against the wild intangible forces let loose in Russia no military science could strive. The "shining sword" could not do battle with phantoms. Hence they were compelled to admit new factors into their problem, and grapple with data abhorrent to their orderly minds.

Two main schools of thought remained distinct among the rulers of Germany. The military chiefs and the fanatics of Pan-Germanism still believed that a little more endurance, a little more sacrifice, would bring the Allies to their knees, and enable Germany to secure gains which would make all her losses worth while, and ensure her future on the grandiose lines which they had planned. The other, the *politiques*, urged that a stalemate had come, and that the balance should now be struck. For against the German war map they saw the solid economic advantages which the Allies possessed, both for the present and for the future. The spectre of post-bellum conditions haunted their minds. Unless she could barter her territorial occupations for economic assistance, Germany might have her hands far over Europe and Asia, and yet be dying at the heart.

The economic position of all the belligerents had become grave by the end of the third year of war. By July 1917 Britain had spent well over 5,000 millions, of which more than one-third was raised by taxes, and two-thirds by the proceeds of loans. It was a colossal indebtedness which faced her, and it had been incurred not wholly on her own account, for over a thousand millions were loans to her Allies, and about 160 millions loans to her own Dominions. She carried on her back the financial burden of her European confederates, and with it all her credit seemed unweakened, and the

elasticity of her revenue-producing power undiminished. New taxes habitually produced more than their budget estimates, and alone among the European belligerents she remained on a gold basis. She was spending now at a rate of close upon seven millions a day; but as the figure included her advances to Allies, the daily cost of the war was rather less than the four and a half millions spent by Germany. In one respect Britain differed from her colleagues and opponents. Germany financed the war almost wholly by loans; France, till the end of 1916, had imposed practically no new taxes; while Britain had trebled her taxation, so that on an average every man, woman, and child within her borders contributed three shillings a day towards the cost of the campaigns. The immediate difficulty of foreign purchases had been solved by America's appearance as an ally, and it might fairly be claimed that, for a country approaching the fourth year of a world-wide war, Britain was in a state of reasonable financial health. France was in a similar state; Italy was being "carried" by her neighbours; and the resources of America were good for another decade.

The Central Powers were in a simpler though far less sound position. Germany, who "carried" the others, had a huge debt, already above 6,000 millions, and increasing at the rate of two thousand millions a year. To pay interest upon it in full would consume the entire surplus production of her people in peace. At present she was paying it out of further borrowings. She had merged the two structures of private and public credit, and peace without indemnities would lead inevitably to the downfall of both, and the reduction of her Government bonds to the position of the paper of a defaulting South American republic. Before the war her citizens groaned under a budget of 160 millions; peace without indemnities would compel them to raise 400 millions for the payment of interest alone. To find a solution would be a giant's task, but for the present it did not trouble her. Victory would solve the problem, and defeat in any case would spell bankruptcy. She had staked everything on the war, and awaited the issue with a gambler's fortitude.

For the actual conduct of operations the financial position of a country, as we have seen, is the less important, provided money, by one device or another, can be obtained. But the economic position, which may be influenced, indeed, by unsound finance in the direction of inflated prices, is a matter of the most urgent gravity. The submarine campaign was a serious blow to the economic strength of all the Allies. It was serious, but not crush-

ing ; it complicated every question of supply, but it did not make them insoluble. The pressure was most severe on Italy, who was a heavy importer of grain and coal, and found herself crippled in her war industries, and faced with an awkward problem for the coming winter. Among the Central Powers the situation was worse. Turkey had long been suffering from naked famine. Bulgaria was on very short commons. In Austria there was starvation in Istria, Bosnia, and German Bohemia, and all-night queues in the cities for the bare necessaries of life. The milk supply of Vienna had dropped to a sixth, and the output of beer to one-sixteenth. In Germany the food supply was better than it had been the year before, for the stocks were more carefully administered ; but its quality was poor, and there was gastric disease everywhere throughout the country. The clothing of the people had gone to pieces, and the footgear had become anything from sabots to dancing-pumps. But the most serious fact was the lack of machinery. Every scrap available was used for war purposes, and the little left in private hands could not be renewed, or even kept in order, because of the lack of lubricants. For the same reason transportation was in an evil case. The rolling stock was falling into disrepair, and the permanent ways could not be properly cared for owing to the scarcity of labour and material. The result was that even military traffic suffered. At one time it had taken six days to move a division from East to West ; it now took nearer a fortnight.

All this made for intense discomfort, and a consequent lowering of spirits. But the main inducement to depression was the doubt as to what would be Germany's fate after the war, whatever the issue. Nothing short of an overwhelming victory would give salvation ; and this was clearly impossible, except in the minds of a few dreamers. She had a vast paper issue ; but she could do nothing with it, for it was not accepted beyond her borders. She was very much in the position of the ancient Greek city state, which could play any pranks it liked with its currency at home but had nothing valid for foreign exchange. But she had considerable stocks of manufactured goods, and she had a fair gold reserve ; and with these she hoped to pay for the imports necessary to restart her industrial life. They might suffice, or they might not, for her requirements in the way of imports would be stupendous. Moreover, the Allies controlled all the world's producing grounds of raw material, without which she must be speedily bankrupt. She could not force them to share ; and they might well

refuse to share, for they had their own stocks to build up. Economically she was at their mercy; and to those in Germany who faced this fact squarely, all talk of the "war map" and shining swords must have seemed foolish bluster. Her deeds had made her a blackleg in the trade union of nations, since she had defied the law of the common interest. She had arrayed against her a world which could in the long run starve her to death.

To those of Germany's citizens who were preoccupied with such perplexed forecasts the results of her unrestricted submarine campaign must have foreboded ill. For more than one neutral followed the example of the United States, and declared war or broke off relations. Every month brought news of some new recruit to the ranks of her enemies. In March it was China; in April it was Cuba and Panama; and by the autumn of 1917, of the South American states only the Argentine and Chile had not declared against her. Eighteen countries had proclaimed war, and nine more had severed diplomatic connections. It was the verdict of the civilized world on the wrongdoer, and—more important for Germany—it was the verdict of those countries which between them possessed the monopoly of the raw materials without which she could not live.

The European neutrals were in a position of growing embarrassment and discomfort. Scandinavia lost heavily in ships from the German submarines, and its trade was grievously crippled. Food conditions were worse, perhaps, in Sweden, Holland, and Switzerland, than among most of the belligerent Allies. Spain for a moment seemed about to break with the Central Powers; but the strong Germanophil elements among her people compelled her Government to pocket its pride. The Allied blockade, owing to America's action, was enormously tightened, for President Wilson's decree of 9th June prohibited the export without special Government licence of any article or commodity which could conceivably be of use to the enemy. The main difficulty which had always confronted the British blockade policy was the necessity of considering American interests, and that handicap was now removed. The chancelleries of Europe, during the summer of 1917, were filled with the complaints of helpless neutrals; and history may well pity the fate of those small nations thus ground between the upper and the nether millstones.

About this time an argument which made for optimism began to be heard in Britain. The business of the Allies was to destroy Germany s power for evil, by defeating and discrediting those

elements in her Government which had been responsible for her outrage on civilization. The break-up of Germany's military machine in the field would have achieved this end; but the same purpose might be gained if her existing régime were so discredited by failure that the break-up came from within her own borders. That would follow if the Allies succeeded in wrecking Germany's hope for the future. It was too often forgotten what was the decisive weapon in war. Now, as ever, it was economic pressure. When countries were small and self-supporting, this was exercised by the defeat of their armies and the invasion and occupation of their territories, so that their life was paralyzed. But in modern war, when the defensive had become all-powerful, another method must be found. Had the Allies been able to break through Germany's trench system and drive her to the Rhine and beyond, that success would have been only a preliminary to the determining and final pressure caused by the dislocation of her whole economic life. But while Haig and Pétain were battering on the Western gate, that final pressure was already being exercised. The Allies controlled all the oversea trade routes and all the world's chief supply grounds of raw material. Compared with such assets and gains the war map of Bethmann-Hollweg was a child's toy. Without any final field victory the Allies already had secured the results of the greatest field victory: they were choking Germany, and ruining her future as much as if they had forced Hindenburg back to the Elbe.

Such an answer to pessimism was in its essence sound, but it needed qualification. To rid the world of Prussianism something more was wanted. The thing must be made a sport and contempt to Germany herself, and while an overwhelming military *débâcle* would have ensured this, the slow and indirect forces of economic pressure could not produce the same moral effect on the German temperament. Before victory was won there must be a recognition of failure in every German mind, and that was still postponed. Prussianism still sat enthroned, for it had persuaded its votaries that this was a defensive struggle, and that it alone stood between the people and the malice of their enemies. Not till it was revealed to the humblest eye as the sole begetter of the war, the parent of all the ills which had descended upon the nation, the wanton devilry which had shattered the edifice their fathers had builded, would civilization have won the victory it needed. Again, the Allied siege, stringent as it was, had its weak points. The submarine counter-attack was not yet under control, and the condi-

tion of Russia might still permit the enemy so to add to his material resources as to obtain a new lease of endurance long enough to defeat the Allied strategy. These crucial matters in the midsummer of 1917 were still in the balance. On the knees of the gods yet lay the major issues of the campaign.

It was still a war of the rank and file. Neither in civilian statesmanship nor in the high military commands had any leader appeared who greatly exceeded the common stature of mankind. There were many able men in every country, but the ship seemed too vast and the currents too infinite for any single hand to control the helm. A hundred clung to it; but often it mastered them, and the vessel swung rudderless to wind and tide. A new star had blazed up in the East in Kerenski, but already it seemed that his fires were paling. The two most conspicuous statesmen at the close of the year were beyond doubt the British Prime Minister and the American President. They had scarcely one quality in common. The one was imaginative, reckless, homely, volcanic, essentially human; the other measured, discreet, impersonal, oracular, and aloof. The monarchy produced the democrat; the republic the autocrat. But both had courage and resolution to inspire their people; both spoke *urbi et orbi;* both stood out as clear-cut and dominant personalities from among many fleeting shadows.

Among the soldiers of the Central Powers the reputation of Ludendorff had so grown that it was in danger of eclipsing the legendary fame of Hindenburg himself. Here was a man of first-rate executive power, who knew with complete certainty what he sought. Mackensen still stood highest among the German generals in the field. Among the Allies, Pétain and Capello had increased their reputations; and two British commanders, Sir Herbert Plumer and Sir Stanley Maude, had revealed the traditional British merits of stamina, forethought, and common sense. It was no insular prejudice, too, which saw in the British Commander-in-Chief one who had a claim to rank among the most indispensable soldiers of the campaign. The delicate duty of working in harmony with France was performed with infinite tact and good-will. Fortune favoured him as little as she had favoured Sir John Moore; but he met her buffets with an inflexible patience and an unfailing courage, and on the Somme, at Arras, and at Messines he showed himself a most competent exponent of the new methods of war.

To sum up: the outlook for the Allies at the close of June

1917 had not the hope of the previous midsummer, or the apparent assurance of the beginning of the year. The sky had suddenly become mysteriously clouded. Wherever in the West they had attacked the enemy they had beaten him; but the final victory in the field, which was theirs by right, seemed to be slipping from their grasp owing to the defection of Russia. Britain's mastery of the sea, too, seemed in danger of failing her at the most vital moment owing to the new campaign under water—a campaign with which by June she had got on terms, but which she had not succeeded in checking. In that obviously lay the immediate crisis. Unless it could be reduced within limits, everything —the military efficiency of the Allied armies, the potentialities of America, the industrial pre-eminence of Britain, even the life and security of the British people—was in dire jeopardy. By June the solution had not been found, and the future was still misty. Moreover, the essential problems of the war were becoming blurred. Up till then the campaign had been fought on data which were familiar and calculable. The material and human strength of each belligerent was known, and the *moral* of each was confidently assessed. But suddenly new factors had appeared out of the void, and what had seemed solid ground became sand and quagmire. It was the old Europe which waged war up till the first months of 1917, but a new Europe had come into being by midsummer, in which nothing could be taken for granted. Everywhere in the world there was the sound of things breaking.

CHAPTER LXXXII.

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.

June 1–*November* 10, 1917.

Haig's Flanders Policy—Sir Herbert Plumer—Battle of Messines—The Preliminaries of Third Ypres—The "Pill-boxes"—The Attack of 31st July—The Weather—The Attack of 16th August—The September and October Actions—Capture of Passchendaele—Summary of Battle.

(*Map*, p. 596.)

I.

The Battle of Arras had died down before the end of May, and Sir Douglas Haig, having protracted the fighting in that area so long as the French on the Aisne required his aid, was now free to turn his attention to the plan which he had elaborated seven months before. This was an offensive against the enemy forces in Flanders, with the aim of clearing the Belgian coast and turning the northern flank of the whole German defence system in the West. It was a scheme which, if successful, promised the most profound and far-reaching results. It would destroy the worst of the submarine bases; it would restore to Belgium her lost territory, and thereby deprive the enemy of one of his cherished bargaining assets; it would cripple his main communications with the depots of the lower Rhineland. It offered the chance of a blow at a vital spot within a reasonable time. It was true that conditions had changed since the plan was first matured. The two months' conflict at Arras had used up a certain part of the British reserves. More important, the disastrous turn of the Russian situation would enable the Germans to add greatly to their strength both in munitions and in men. Time, therefore, was the essence of the business. The blow must be struck at the earliest possible hour, for delay meant aggrandizement for the enemy.

But if the prize for success was high, the difficulties of the

enterprise were great. For twelve months the front between the sea and the Lys had been all but stagnant. It had been for the first two years the chief cockpit of British arms, and the enemy had spent infinite ingenuity and labour on perfecting his defences. In the half-moon of hills * round Ypres and the ridge of Wytschaete and Messines he had view-points which commanded the whole countryside, and especially the British line within the Salient. Any preparations for attack would be conducted under his watchful eye. Moreover, the heavy, waterlogged clay of the flats where our front lay was terribly at the mercy of weather, and in rain became a bottomless swamp, so that any attack must be in the position of a horseman taking a stiff fence from a bad jumping-off ground. Lastly, the Germans were acutely conscious of the importance of the terrain, and there was little chance of taking them by surprise.

In the beginning of June the enemy in the Ypres area lay as follows. North of Ypres he was west of the canal between Steenstraate and Boesinghe. East of Ypres his front curved in a shallow arc, following the high ground called the Pilkem ridge, by Wieltje and Hooge, which was the westernmost of the low tiers of hill which enclosed the Salient. From Observatory Ridge south of Hooge his line turned south-westward by Mount Sorrel and Hill 60 across the Ypres–Comines Canal to a point just south of the hamlet of St. Eloi. It then became a rounded salient, following the western skirts of the promontory formed by the Wytschaete–Messines ridge. At the south end of this ridge it turned eastward down the valley of the Steenebeek, crossed the Douve, and passed east of St. Yves to the banks of the Lys. The apex of the Ypres Salient had been Becelaere in October 1914; in April 1915 it had been Broodseinde; and by the end of the Second Battle of Ypres it had contracted to Verlorenhoek and Hooge. During subsequent fighting it had shrunk still further, so that now the enemy front was only some two miles from the town. Not only was the eastern high ground wholly in the enemy's hands, but at the southern re-entrant Hill 60 gave him direct observation over the Salient, and the Wytschaete–Messines ridge commanded Ypres itself, and every yard of the British positions. The village of Wytschaete stood 260 feet high on the loftiest point, and Messines, at the south end of the ridge, gave a prospect over the Lys valley and enfiladed the

* The extreme insignificance of these hills should be remembered. Ypres itself is 82 feet above the sea, so Wytschaete's 260 feet of height does not represent much compared to the general level of the country.

British lines on the Douve. If Haig intended to break out from the Salient, he must first clear the Germans off the southern ridges. Till that was achieved the British would be fighting blindly against an enemy with a hundred eyes.

In June the German front from the sea to the Oise was held by the Army Group of the Bavarian Crown Prince. The IV. Army, from the coast to the Douve, was under General Sixt von Armin, who had commanded the 4th Corps at the Somme, and had shown himself one of the most original and fruitful tacticians on the German side. South of him lay the VI. Army, where Otto von Below had replaced Falkenhausen,* the right wing of which extended for a little way north of the Lys. Armin expected an assault even before our bombardment began, and he rightly diagnosed that its terrain would be the Messines ridge. There lay the 4th Corps, and on 1st June its commander, General von Laffert, issued an order to his troops which accurately defined the limits of the British attack. He ordered that all measures designed for defence and counter-attack should be carefully tested ; the absolute retention of the natural strong points of Wytschaete and Messines had become of the utmost importance for the domination of the whole Wytschaete salient ; these strong points, therefore, must not fall, even temporarily, into the enemy's hands. Armin was anxious but confident. He had a position strong by nature, and enormously fortified by art. He had ample reserves of men, and he had brought up many new batteries, which were disposed mainly north and south of the Wytschaete salient, so as to enfilade any British advance and be themselves safe from capture. He had a number of new anti-tank guns, and in the flattish ground at each end of the ridge he experimented in the construction of those concrete " pill-boxes " which were later to prove so serious an obstacle to the British advance from Ypres. His plan was to hold his front line lightly, but to have strong reserves in rear to defend any position of importance. Behind these were his battle reserves, to be used for counter-attacks ; for his tactical policy was to trust to counter-attack before the enemy had secured his ground, rather than to fight desperately for every yard. For such tactics it was essential that the moment of the real offensive should be instantly grasped, and if possible foreseen. The reserves must be moved at once ; but it would be fatal if they were moved because of a feint, for in that case they would fall under our barrage and be depleted

* Falkenhausen succeeded Bissing as Governor-General of Belgium. Otto von Below handed over his command in Macedonia to von Scholtz.

before the time had come for their use. Armin had judged rightly about the terrain ; but, as it happened, he could not define the hour. In no British attack had Haig succeeded in concealing the *locale*, but in all he had perplexed the enemy as to the exact time of assault.

The British front was held by the Second Army, which had not altered its position since the spring of 1915. The First Army had fought at Festubert, and had borne the brunt of Loos. The Fourth and Fifth Armies had conducted the Battle of the Somme. The First, Third, and Fifth Armies had been engaged at Arras. But the last great action of the Second Army had been Second Ypres. It had seen much bitter fighting in 1916 round Hooge and The Bluff ; but it had taken no part as an army in any major battle, though its divisions had been drawn upon for the Somme and Arras. To hold a long front not actively engaged, and to provide reinforcements for other armies, is one of the most difficult duties which can fall to the lot of a general. Corporate unity seems to have gone from his command, and it needs patience and resolution to keep up that vigilance and *esprit de corps* which are essential in war. The Second Army was fortunate in its leader. Sir Herbert Plumer, now sixty years of age, had in the highest degree the traditional virtues of the British soldier, and especially of those county line regiments which have always been the backbone of the British army. He had fought with his regiment, the York and Lancaster, in the Sudan in 1884 ; he had served in the Matabele rebellion ; in the South African War he had contributed to the relief of Mafeking, had taken Pietersburg, and had hunted De Wet in the Cape Colony. At the Second Battle of Ypres he had shown a rapidity of decision and an imperturbability of temper which had turned the tide in that grim encounter. But his finest work had been accomplished during the long months of comparative inaction which followed. He had been a true warden of the Flanders marches, and had watched over every mile of that front, so that our energy in defence and in the minor offensives of trench warfare never slackened. Assisted by a most competent staff, he had inspired throughout his army a complete trust in their leader, and had welded all types—old regulars, Territorials, New Army—into one tempered weapon. There were no jealousies under his command, and every man in it knew that competence and faithfulness would be recognized and rewarded. Moreover, for a year and more he had been making ready for the offensive in which he was to play the chief part. Methodical and patient preparation had been carried by him to the pitch of genius.

To understand the battle it is necessary to examine more closely the topography of the Wytschaete–Messines ridge. Seen from the western hills, such as Kemmel, behind the British lines, it appeared to be an inconsiderable slope merging in the north in the low ridges east of Ypres, but breaking down in the south to the Lys valley in a steeper gradient. The landmarks on it were the ruins of the White Château at Hollebeke, the dust-heap which once was Wytschaete village, and the tooth of the ruined church of Messines. Viewed from below, from the British trenches in the marshy flats of the Steenebeek, it was more imposing—a low hillside seamed with white trenches, and dotted with the debris of old woods—a bald, desolated height, arid as a brickfield, rising from the rank grass and yellow mustard of no-man's-land. The German first-line trenches curved along the foot of the slope, and their second-line system made an inner curve on the crest of the ridge. To the north the Germans held Hill 60 and the Mound at St. Eloi, and had constructed strong fortifications in the grounds of the White Château, and along the road called the Damm Strasse which led from Hollebeke to Wytschaete. But, as in all salients, the most important defence was the chord which cut the arc—what the German called *Sehnenstellung*—and which was intended as the rear defence should the front of the salient be carried. The third German system was such a chord, running from Mount Sorrel in the north, a little east of the village of Oosttaverne, to Gapaard in the south. This line was the proper base of the salient. A mile east of it lay the fourth and final German position in that area which reached the Lys at the town of Warneton. The Oosttaverne line was the British objective in the action, for its capture would mean that the salient had gone and the whole ridge was in our hands. To reach it the enemy front must be penetrated to a depth of two and a half miles. Its length was about six miles; but if the curve of the main salient was followed without reckoning the many minor salients and re-entrants, the whole battle frontage was nearly ten. It should be remembered, too, that, apart from the main enemy lines, the whole western face of the ridge, and all the little woods to the north and north-west, were a maze of skilfully sited trenches and redoubts, designed to bring flanking fire to bear upon any ground won by the attack.

The British front of assault was held by three of the six corps of the Second Army. From opposite Mount Sorrel, astride the Ypres–Comines Canal to the Grand Bois just north of Wytschaete, lay the 10th Corps under Sir T. L. N. Morland, with the 23rd Division

on its left, the 47th Division in the centre, the 41st Division on the right, and the 24th Division in support. Opposite Wytschaete was the 9th Corps, under Sir A. Hamilton-Gordon, with the 19th, 16th, and 36th Divisions in line from left to right, and the 11th Division in support. South lay the 2nd Australian Corps, under Sir A. J. Godley, with the 25th Division on its left, the New Zealand Division as its centre, the 3rd Australian Division on its right astride the Douve, and the 4th Australian Division in support. The two southern corps had the task of the direct assault on the ridge, while the 10th Corps, with a much longer front, had to clear the hillocks towards the Ypres Salient, and advance upon the ridge and the Oosttaverne line from its northern flank.

The Wytschaete–Messines ridge had seen no fighting since the close of 1914. At the end of October in that year, during the First Battle of Ypres, Allenby's weary cavalry, assisted by Indian and British infantry, had made for two days a gallant stand at Messines before they were forced into the flats. In December a combined attack had been made by French and British troops on the woods of Petit Bois and Maedelsteed, west of Wytschaete, but the position had proved too strong to carry. Thereafter, while the battle had raged as near as St. Eloi in the north and Fromelles in the south, the Messines area had been an enclave of quiet. But for nearly two years an offensive had been going on underground. As early as July 1915 it had been resolved to make use of the clay stratum below our position for extensive mining operations, and in January 1916 we had gone seriously to work. We used in our tunnelling companies some of the best expert talent in the world, men who in private life had received large salaries from mining corporations. It was work attended by endless difficulties and dangers. Water-bearing strata would suddenly be encountered, which necessitated damming and pumping work on a big scale. The enemy was busy counter-mining, and we had to be ever on the watch to detect his progress, and by *camouflets* * to blow in his galleries. At some points the struggle was continuous and desperate, especially after February 1, 1917. At The Bluff, for instance, between January 16, 1916, and June 7, 1917, twenty-seven *camouflets* were blown, seventeen by the British and ten by the enemy. The Spanbroekmolen mine, south-west of Wytschaete, had its gallery destroyed; for three months it was cut off, and only reopened by a great effort the day preceding the Messines

* A *camouflet* is a mine with a small charge, intended only to destroy an enemy shaft, and not to make a crater.

attack. But the most dramatic case was that of Hill 60, where the enemy drove a gallery which was bound to cut ours. He was allowed to proceed, since it was ascertained that if our attack took place on the day arranged he would just fail to reach us. In all we dug twenty-four mines, and some of these were ready a year before the attack. We constructed some five miles of galleries, and charged them with over a million pounds of ammonal. Four were outside the front ultimately selected for our attack, and one was destroyed by the enemy. But on the evening of 6th June nineteen were waiting for zero hour.

From the last days of May a pitiless bombardment had assailed the enemy area, devastating his front line and searching out his rear positions. The last remnants of Wytschaete and Messines villages disappeared. The woods on the slopes ceased to be tattered, and became fields of stumps. In that hot, dry weather a cloud of dust hung all day long about the slopes, and at night they blazed like the boulevard of a great city. Our raiding activity was unceasing, and from dazed prisoners and from many captured letters we learned of the miseries of the enemy. British aircraft spent their days over the German hinterland, and prevented any enemy planes from learning the extent of our preparation. "Our machines never even get so far as our front lines," wrote a German officer. In one fight five British planes encountered twenty-seven German, wrecked eight, and returned safely home. Between 1st June and 6th June we destroyed twenty-four enemy machines, and drove down twenty-three out of control, at the cost of ten of our own.

On the evening of Wednesday, 6th June, the weather broke in a violent thunderstorm. Torrents of rain fell, and from the baked earth rose a warm mist which enfolded the ground like a cloak. During the night the heavens were overcast, so that the full moon was not seen, and only a luminous glow told of its presence. But at 2.30 a.m. on the 7th the skies cleared, the moon rode out, and to a watcher on the hills to the west the whole landscape stood forth in a sheen made up of moonlight and the foreglow of dawn. Our bombardment had abated, but during the night the enemy had grown nervous. He had put up rockets and flares calling for a barrage, and his guns began to pour forth shrapnel and high explosives. Somewhere north of Wytschaete a dump had caught fire, and sent up tongues of red flame. As the dawn broadened our guns seemed to cease, though the enemy's were still active. The air was full of the hum of our bombing and reconnoitring

planes flying eastward, and our balloons were going up—tawny patches against the June sky. Then came a burst of German high explosives, and then, at precisely ten minutes past three, a sound compared to which all other noises were silence.

From Hill 60 in the north to the edge of Messines, with a shock that made the solid earth quiver like a pole in the wind, nineteen volcanoes leaped to heaven. Nineteen sheets of flame seemed to fill the world. For a moment it looked as if the earth, under a magician's wand, had been contorted into gigantic toadstools. The black cloud-caps seemed as real as the soil beneath them. Then they shook and wavered and thinned, leaving a brume of dust, rosy and golden atop with the rising sun. And at the same moment, while the ears were still throbbing with the concussion of the mines, every British gun opened on the enemy. Flashes of many colours stabbed the wall of dust, the bursts of shrapnel stood out white against it, and smoke barrages from our trenches burrowed into its roots. The sun was now above the horizon, and turned the fringes of the cloud to a hot purple and crimson. No battle had ever a more beautiful and terrible staging. And while the debris of the explosion still hung in the air the British divisions of assault went over their parapets.

They entered at once upon a world like the nether pit—poisonous with gas fumes, twisted and riven out of all character, a maze of quarried stone, moving earth, splintered concrete, broken wire, and horrible fragments of humanity. In most places the German front lines had been blown out of existence. A few nerve-shattered survivors were taken prisoner in the dug-outs that had escaped destruction, and here and there a gallant machine-gun officer, who had miraculously survived, obeyed his orders till death took him. Let us follow from south to north the progress of the British advance.

The 3rd Australian Division, facing the extreme right of Otto von Below's VI. Army, pushed across the Douve on duckboard bridges, and, assisted by a tank, drove the enemy by the early afternoon from the southern slopes of the Messines ridge. This safeguarded our right flank, and enabled the New Zealand Division to move securely on Messines village. The latter swarmed across the Steenebeek and, climbing the hill on the side where the Armentières road dipped to the flats, cleared Messines by seven o'clock. It was now reinforced by the 4th Australians, who moved on to the redoubt called Fanny's Farm, half a mile to the north-east. A tank cleared out the garrison, and by midday the 2nd Australian Corps had won their main objective.

Farther north the 36th (Ulster) Division, with the 25th Division on its right, had moved from the trenches north of Wulverghem against that part of the ridge which lay between Messines and Wytschaete. They had before them a peculiarly difficult problem. On the western slope, midway between the two villages, lay the Bois de l'Enfer and the concrete fort of l'Enfer, and to the south another nest of redoubts which was known as Hell Farm. To reach the crest the division had to move down the exposed western slope of the Steenebeek valley, cross the stream, ascend the opposite slope, and carry the various Hell positions. Beyond the crest were strong trench lines, and a long open slope all the way to Oosttaverne and Gapaard. From their starting-place it was 2,000 yards to the crest. The German position had been held by the 40th Saxons; but on the evening of the 6th June they were relieved by the famous 3rd Bavarians, so that the two divisions had to face an unwearied and most gallant enemy.

During the night before the attack the Cheshires in the 25th Division had moved into no-man's-land, and dug a trench for their starting-point next day. Hence the enemy barrage, when it began, fell behind them. The explosion of the Spanbroekmolen mine gave the divisions some cover when they raced down the Steenebeek slopes. Across the stream they rushed and up the ridge, and soon the Cheshires were at work among the Hell redoubts. By stern hand-to-hand fighting they cleared them out, and presently the divisions were on the crest line, where a broad highway linked Messines and Wytschaete. There they halted for reserves, and then swept through the trench system east of the road. Linked up with the Australians, they took Middle Farm and Despagne Farm, and by midday were up against the Oosttaverne line.

Wytschaete fell to the left wing of the Ulstermen and the 16th (South Ireland) Division, when for the first time for generations were seen Irish units, widely sundered by politics and creed, fighting in generous rivalry for a common cause. The immediate obstacle, the wood called Petit Bois, was wiped out of being by a mine explosion. The Irish drove on into Wytschaete Wood, tearing through the uncut wire, and overwhelming machine-gun nests by the speed of their onset. By eight o'clock they were opposite the northern and western defences of Wytschaete, while the Ulstermen were waiting at the southern end of the village. Long before noon the place was carried, and the Irish were moving down the road to Oosttaverne. In the early hours of the day this division had sustained a grievous loss. The brother of the Irish Nationalist

leader, Major William Redmond, was hit by a shell fragment, and died a few hours later. Though far beyond military age, he had enlisted early in the war, and had steadfastly endured those hardships of campaigning which do not come easily to a man well advanced in middle life. He had striven all his days for Irish unity, and he had put his precepts most gallantly into practice. He lived to see that union of spirit for one moment realized, not in the dusty *coulisses* of politics, but in the nobler arena of battle, and it was an Ulster ambulance that bore him from the field. Meantime, on the left of the Irish and beyond the Wytschaete–Vierstraat road the 19th Division was moving on the northern butt of the ridge. It carried the Grand Bois, and soon was over the crest and through the German second system beyond the Ypres–Armentières road. By midday it was fighting in Oosttaverne Wood, and was early in the afternoon on the edge of Oosttaverne itself.

On the British left the situation was more complex, for the tactical problem was far less simple than the straightforward assault on the ridge. Morland's 10th Corps had to fight astride a canal in a confused country of hillocks and ravines and nondescript woods. The extreme left, the North England troops of the 23rd Division, had the easiest task. Around Mount Sorrel and Armagh Wood the German front had been blown to pieces. Hill 60, with its elaborate defences, had virtually disappeared. Our losses were trifling, and one battalion won its objective with only ten casualties. But the Londoners of the 47th Division had a harder task. Few divisions had borne themselves more gallantly in the war, and Loos and High Wood were only two of their many battle honours. They were held by machine-gun fire from the spoil banks on each side of the Ypres–Comines Canal; and, with the 41st Division on the right, had to fight for the strongholds of Ravine Wood and Battle Wood, the White Château, and the long, fortified line of the Damm Strasse. The last had been well broken up by our bombardment, but in the grounds and outbuildings of the Château and around the dry lake there was sharp fighting. By the early afternoon, however, the 10th Corps had gained its final objectives, with the exception of a small part of the eastern end of Battle Wood and a few strong points on the canal banks. The flank was therefore safe, and the British centre lay parallel to the Oosttaverne line, between 400 and 700 yards to the west of it. Our guns had advanced, and the time had come for the final attack. It was launched about three o'clock, and at 3.45 we entered the village of Oosttaverne. At four the 11th and 19th Divisions had broken the Oosttaverne line east of the

village, and captured twelve guns. Before darkness fell the whole of the line was in our hands, and Plumer had gained his final objective.

The counter-attack which Armin had planned was slow to develop. On the afternoon of the 7th there was a small attempt on the right of our front, which was easily repulsed by the Australians. During the night we secured our gains, and on the morning of the 8th cleared a few remaining lengths of German trench. Not till that evening was there any sign of a counter-stroke. At 7 p.m., after an intense bombardment, the Germans attacked along nearly the whole length of our new line, and at every point were repulsed. The surprise and shock of the action of the 7th had been too great to permit of a speedy recovery. During the next few days the Australians took the farm of La Potterie, little more than a mile west of Warneton and the village of Gapaard, on the Ypres–Warneton road. The position of the right wing of Otto von Below's VI. Army between St. Yves and the Lys was now untenable. It gradually withdrew to La Basse Ville, and by the 14th the whole of the old German positions north of the Lys, both front and support lines, had fallen into our hands. That evening we attacked again on both our flanks, clearing out some of the strong points north of the Ypres–Comines Canal, and forcing the enemy on the south back to the line of the river Warnave.

Sir Herbert Plumer's task had been brilliantly and fully accomplished. In a single day's fighting he had advanced two and a half miles on a front of nearly ten; he had wiped out the German salient, and carried also its chord; he had stormed positions on the heights which the enemy regarded as impregnable; his losses were extraordinarily small, and he had taken 7,200 prisoners, 67 guns, 94 trench mortars, and 294 machine guns. The Battle of Messines will rank in history with Nivelle's two victories at Verdun in the winter of 1916 as a perfect instance of the success of the limited objective. It could not be a normal type of battle. The elaborate preparation, the concentration of guns, and the careful rehearsal of every part demanded time and quiet which cannot be commonly reckoned on in war. But Plumer had achieved what deserves to be regarded as in its own fashion a tactical masterpiece.

Meantime, in order to mask the preparations which were being made for the main enterprise of the summer—the break-out from the Ypres Salient—General Horne's Third Army undertook various small offensives. On 14th June it carried by a surprise attack the enemy lines on the crest of Infantry Hill south-east of Arras, taking

175 prisoners in two minutes. On the 15th it took a sector of the Hindenburg Line north-east of Bullecourt. For some weeks Canadian and English troops had been active in the neighbourhood of Lens, and on the 24th the 46th (North Midland) Division carried Hill 65, south-west of the town, forcing the enemy to withdraw on both sides of the Souchez river. On the 26th the Canadians took La Coulotte, and on the morning of the 28th were in the outskirts of Avion. That evening General Horne devised an ingenious bluff. Elaborate demonstrations were made by means of the discharge of gas and smoke to convince the enemy that he was about to be attacked on the twelve-mile front from Gavrelle to Hulluch, and a bogus raid was carried out south-east of Loos. The real attack was made on a front of 2,000 yards in front of Oppy, and by the Canadians and North Midlanders astride the Souchez river. They gained all their objectives, including the southern part of the ruins of Avion and the hamlet of Eleu dit Leauvette, on the Lens–Arras road, together with 300 prisoners and many machine guns. More important, they succeeded in puzzling the enemy as to what was the aim of the main offensive. Messines pointed to Lille as much as to Ypres, and the activity at Lens suggested that the British aim might be to cut in to the north and south of Lille, and wrest the great French industrial city from the enemy.

II.

The preliminary work of Messines was over by 12th June, but it was not till late in July that the day for the major advance could be fixed. The break-out from the Ypres Salient was the residuum left to Haig of the great Flanders offensive, which should have been begun before the end of April. The preparation for it had been impeded by the necessity of turning his attention to other areas, and when at last his hands seemed free new obstacles arose which meant further postponements. To increase his reserves he begged the French to take over part of his defensive front. This they were unable to do, but asked that they should have a hand in the Flanders attack, which Haig reluctantly conceded. His own and Joffre's fears were justified; France was averse to facing the truth that her armies should be left for some time to the *rôle* of the defensive. She wished to share in any advance, but yet could not take the responsibility for it, and at the same time would not shorten the front of Britain, on whom the onus of the offensive

fell. There were many discussions and weary delays before Anthoine brought the French First Army to the British left from Boesinghe northward, and the best of the summer weather was lost.

The plan, as it was finally put into action, bristled with difficulties which might have deterred a less stout-hearted commander than Sir Douglas Haig. It was in some degree a race against time. If a true strategic purpose was to be effected before winter, the first stages must be quickly passed. The high ground east of the Salient must be won in a fortnight, to enable the British to move against the German bases in West Flanders and clear the coast-line. Moreover, it was now evident that the Russian front was crumbling; already divisions and batteries had come westward, and those left behind had been skimmed for shock-troops. Soon the process would proceed more rapidly, and the British would be faced with an accumulation of reserves strong enough to bar their way. Again, the nature of the terrain made any offensive a gamble with the weather. A dry autumn like that of 1914 would be well enough, but a repetition of the Somme experience must spell disaster. The Salient was, after Verdun, the most tortured of the Western battlefields. Constant shelling of the low ground west of the ridges had blocked or diverted the streams and the natural drainage and turned it into a sodden wilderness. Much rain would make of it a morass where tanks could not be used, and transport could scarcely move, and troops would be exposed to the last degree of misery. Finally, it was ill ground to debouch from; for though we had won the Messines heights, the enemy still held the slopes which, in semicircular tiers, rise to the main ridge of Passchendaele, and had direct observation over all the land west to the canal and the ruins of Ypres. Whatever might be the strength and skill of the Germans, they were less formidable than the barriers which Nature herself might place in the British path.

But the commander of the German IV. Army was no despicable antagonist. He had suffered a sharp defeat at Messines; but he had the type of mind which reacts against failure, and, as on the Somme a year before, he set himself to adapt his defence to the British mode of attack. During the first half of 1917 the enemy's major plan had been that of retirement through various fortified zones. He was still strictly on the defensive, and his aim was to allow the Allies to waste their strength in making small territorial gains which had no real strategic value. He had successively lost all his most important observation points; but he had still on

most parts of his front those immense entrenchments, constructed largely by the labour of Russian prisoners, which could only be captured piecemeal after a great expense of shells. In Flanders the nature of the ground did not permit of a second Siegfried Line. Deep dug-outs and concrete-lined trenches were impossible because of the waterlogged soil, and he was compelled to find new tactics. Armin's solution was the "pill-box" which we have already noted at Messines. These were small concrete forts, sited among the ruins of a farm or in some derelict piece of woodland, often raised only a yard or two above the ground level, and bristling with machine guns. The low entrance was at the rear, and the ordinary pill-box held from twenty to forty men. It was easy to make, for the wooden or steel framework could be brought up on any dark night and filled with concrete. They were echeloned in depth with great skill; and, in the wiring, alleys were left so that an unwary advance would be trapped among them and exposed to enfilading fire. Their small size made them a difficult mark for heavy guns, and since they were protected by concrete at least three feet thick, they were impregnable to the ordinary barrage of field artillery.

The enemy's plan was to hold his first line—which was often a mere string of shell-craters linked by a trench—with few men, who would fall back before an assault. He had his guns well behind, so that they should not be captured in the first rush, and would be available for a barrage when his opponents were entangled in the "pill-box" zone. Finally, he had his reserves in the second line, ready for the counter-stroke before the attack could secure the ground won. It will be seen that these tactics were admirably suited for the exposed and contorted ground of the Salient. Any attack would be allowed to make some advance; but if the German plan worked well, this advance would be short lived, and would be dearly paid for. Instead of the cast-iron front of the Siegfried area, the Flanders line would be highly elastic, but would spring back into position after pressure with a deadly rebound.*

* Just before the battle the Germans used two new and deadly forms of gas in their Blue Cross and Yellow Cross shell. The progress of the gas weapon since the German use of chlorine in April 1915 deserves a brief note. The first step was to use in cloud attacks a preparation of phosgene, a more deadly gas, and to develop gas shells which had the advantage of being independent of the wind. Early in 1917 they introduced a lethal gas shell (Green Cross), containing diphosgene, and a variant, Green Cross I., containing 50 per cent. of chlorpicrin. In July 1917 Blue Cross shell appeared containing a non-persistent gas made from arsenic compounds, and Yellow Cross shell, containing dichlorethyl sulphide, which had practically no smell and could remain for days on the surface of the ground. This latter, which we called

The new offensive involved a complete redistribution of the Allied forces. The front of the Third Army, under Sir Julian Byng, who had succeeded to Allenby's command, was greatly extended, and now covered all the ground between Arras and the junction with the French. This released Sir Hubert Gough's Fifth Army and Sir Henry Rawlinson's Fourth Army for service in the north. In early June French troops had held the front on the Yser between St. Georges and the sea. These were now relieved by the British Fourth Army. The Belgian forces on the canal drew in their right from Boesinghe to Noordschoote, and that section was occupied by the French First Army of six divisions, under Anthoine, who had commanded the Sixth Army in spring in the Moronvillers battle. From Boesinghe to the Zillebeke–Zandvoorde road south-east of Ypres lay the British Fifth Army, and on its right the Second Army as far as the Lys. From Armentières to Arras Sir Henry Horne's First Army held the front. The main striking forces were Gough's and Anthoine's; but it was intended that Horne should undertake, by way of distraction, certain movements against Lens, and that Plumer should threaten to the south of the Salient, so as to compel the enemy to distribute his artillery fire.

The appearance of Rawlinson on the coast in the second half of June gravely alarmed the German Command. It seemed to indicate an attack along the shore, assisted by our Fleet at sea, which had long been a favourite subject of German speculation. They resolved to anticipate it by depriving the British of their bridgehead east of the canalized Yser. The dunes formed a belt of dry land along the coast about a mile wide, where movement was possible in any weather; but south of them lay a flat country criss-crossed with streams and ditches which could be easily flooded so as to bar the advance of an enemy. The Allied line, which from Dixmude northward lay on the west bank of the Yser, crossed to the east bank south of Nieuport. This gave us a bridge-end about two miles long, and from 600 to 1,200 yards deep, from the Plasschendaele Canal south of Lombartzyde to the sea. Half-way

mustard gas, was far the deadliest gas which the enemy evolved. In 1917 Germany was turning out a million gas shells a month. On the Allied side the defence was very soon perfected, and the British box-respirator was a complete protection against the ordinary gas cloud and the Green Cross and Blue Cross shell. At first chlorine was the only gas which Britain could produce, and our production of gas shells was slow in developing. We did not get mustard gas of our own till September 1918. Our most efficient form of gas offensive was probably the Livens Projector, a kind of rude trench mortar lobbing heavy gas bombs, which was first used towards the close of the Battle of the Somme.

a dyke known as the Geleide Creek intersected our front. If the enemy could drive us across the Yser, he would have a stronger defensive position in the event of a coastal advance.

Very early on the morning of Tuesday, 10th July, an intense bombardment broke out against the bridgehead. There was a heavy gale blowing, which accounted for the absence of British naval support. In the dune and polder country trenches were impossible, and the British defence consisted of breastworks built in the sand. These were speedily flattened out, and all the bridges across the Yser north of the Geleide dyke were destroyed, as well as the bridges over the dyke itself. The bombardment continued all day, and at 6.30 in the evening troops of a German Naval Division advanced in three waves. The bridgehead between the Geleide Creek and the shore was held by two battalions of the 1st Division, the 1st Northamptons and the 2nd King's Royal Rifles. Since all communications were destroyed, they were unable to fall back; and for an hour, against overwhelming numbers, and in positions from which all cover had gone, they maintained a most gallant defence. By eight o'clock the action was over, and the two battalions had disappeared as units, though during that and the following night some seventy men and four officers managed to swim the Yser and return to our lines. The northern part of the bridgehead was captured; but south of the Geleide dyke, opposite Lombartzyde, where our position had greater depth, and some of the Yser bridges were still intact, the assault was held, and the enemy driven out of our lines by a counter-attack. The affair was trivial and easily explicable: the bridgehead was at the mercy of a sudden attack in force unless we had chosen to take very special measures to defend it. It was another instance of what the past two years had abundantly proved—that any advanced trench system could be taken by the side which was prepared to mass sufficient troops and guns.

Meantime through July the preparations for the great Salient battle were being assiduously pressed on. The shell of Ypres did not provide, either above ground or underground, the cover for the assembling of troops which Arras had afforded; consequently the labours of our tunnelling companies were heavy and incessant. Our aircraft did marvellous work in locating enemy batteries, and our guns in destroying them. So good was our counter-battery work that the enemy frequently withdrew his guns, and thus compelled us to postpone our attack in order that the new positions might be located. All through July our bombardment continued,

till every corner of the Salient was drenched with our fire. We made constant raids and gas attacks, the latter with deadly effect; and it is worth noting that the place where the enemy seems to have suffered most from this weapon was precisely the region astride the Poelcappelle road where in April 1915 he had made his first gas attack on the French and the Canadians. Towards the end of the month there were signs that Armin might upset our plans by a withdrawal to his rear defences, and we had to keep jealous watch on the enemy's movements. On 27th July, in the Boesinghe area, it was discovered that his front trenches were unoccupied, and that he had fallen back some distance, whether out of fear of mines like those at Messines or from the sheer weight of our bombardment. Anthoine's right wing and Gough's left accordingly crossed the canal, and occupied the German front and support lines on a front of 3,000 yards. They held their ground till the attack began, and managed by night to throw seventeen bridges across the canal in their rear.

The front of attack was fifteen miles long, from the Lys river to a little north of Steenstraate, but the main effort was planned for the seven and a half miles between Boesinghe and the Zillebeke–Zandvoorde road. The Allied line ran from the canal in a curve south-eastward through the village of Wieltje and along the foot of the low slope, which may be defined by the points Pilkem, Bellewaarde, Hooge, and Sanctuary Wood. Thence it ran south across the Ypres–Comines Canal to the Oosttaverne line, and thence to the Lys opposite La Basse Ville. It was the business of the French to clear the land between the canal and that mysterious creek which in its lower reaches is called the Martjevaart, and farther up the St. Jansbeek. Their right had to cover much ground, for it had to keep pace with Gough's left. The task of the British Fifth Army was, by a series of bounds, to capture the enemy's first defences situated on the forward slope of the rising ground, and his second position sited along the crest, and at the same time to secure the crossings of the Steenebeek, the muddy ditch which flows by St. Julien to join the St. Jansbeek, north-east of Bixschoote. If this could be done at once and the weather favoured, a strong defensive flank could be formed for a break-through in the direction of Thourout towards the north-east. In the Fifth Army were four corps of assault: from left to right, the 14th, under Lord Cavan—the Guards and 38th Divisions; the 18th, under Lieutenant-General Ivor Maxse—51st and 39th Divisions; the 19th, under Lieutenant-General Watts—55th and 15th Divisions;

and the 2nd, under Lieutenant-General Jacob—8th, 18th, 30th, and 24th Divisions. The Second Army, on their right, had a strictly limited objective. Its right was ordered to take La Basse Ville, on the Lys, and its left to capture Hollebeke village, and clear the difficult ground north of the bend of the Ypres–Comines Canal and east of Battle Wood. Against the British attack alone the enemy had thirteen divisions in line, including the 3rd Guard Division, and four Bavarian—the 4th, 10th, 16th, and 6th Reserve.

The last week of July was dull, cloudy weather, with poor visibility for air work. On the morning of Monday, the 30th, came a heavy thunderstorm, and rain fell in the afternoon. All day the Allied bombardment continued at its height, and during the drizzling night. The rain stopped towards dawn, but a thick mist remained, and the ground was plashy and the skies overcast as zero hour drew near. There was a short lull in the firing after three; but precisely at 3.50 a.m. on the 31st. the whole Allied front broke into flame. Under cover of discharges of thermit and blazing oil, and a barrage of exceptional weight, the infantry crossed their parapets, and the battle began.

The whole of the German front position fell at once. Anthoine crossed the canal and took Steenstraate. Verlorenhoek fell to the 15th Division, which that day added to a record of victories which included Martinpuich and Feuchy. Farther south, pushing through Sanctuary Wood and Shrewsbury Forest, we carried the château of Hooge and the lake of Bellewaarde, and came to the foot of that lift of the Menin road which was the pillar of the enemy's position on the heights. The Allies then pressed on to the attack on the second position, and by nine in the morning the whole of it north of Westhoek was in their hands. Frezenberg, after a stubborn fight, was won by the 15th Division; the 39th Division troops entered St. Julien; and the 38th (Welsh) Division took Pilkem and annihilated the Fusilier regiment of the 3rd Prussian Guards. Pommern Redoubt, north of Frezenberg, was won by the 55th Division of West Lancashire Territorials. The 51st Highland Territorials and the Guards seized the crossings of the Steenebeek. In a captured German document, which provided a "black list" of the British divisions, the 51st was given first place, and the enemy that day had no reason to revise his judgment. On the centre and left of our attack all our final objectives had been gained, and at one or two points we had gone beyond them. The French, for example, took Bixschoote; the Guards

advanced beyond the Steenebeek; and at one point in our centre we reached and penetrated the enemy's third trench system, that known as the Gheluvelt–Langemarck line.

More slow and difficult was the fighting on the right of the Fifth Army along the Menin road. Stirling Castle, the strong point which dominated Ypres south of the highway, was taken. But before the shell-shattered patches called Glencorse Wood and Inverness Copse the enemy had massed strongly for defence, for they were the key of his whole position; and the attacking brigades —Lancashire, Irish, and Scots—clung with difficulty to their footing on the ridge, but could go no farther. In the afternoon, when a downpour of rain had begun to fall, the enemy counter-attacked from south of the Menin road to north of St. Julien. In spite of poor visibility owing to the thick weather, our artillery held him, though we had to fall back from all but the western skirts of Westhoek. Our advanced troops north of St. Julien were also for the most part withdrawn to the line of the Steenebeek. By the evening the position was that everywhere we had carried the German first line, and had gained all the crest of the first ridge, and so denied the enemy observation over the Salient. From Westhoek to St. Julien we had taken the German second line, and north of St. Julien were well beyond it. On two-thirds of our front in the Salient we had won our first objectives, while, of the remaining third, we had just fallen short of our extreme aim on one-half, and on the other had exceeded it. On the whole battlefield we had taken over 6,000 prisoners, including 133 officers. It was no small triumph for an attack in foul weather over some of the most difficult country in which armies ever fought.

The subsidiary action fought by the Second Army was an unbroken success. On the right, after a fifty minutes' struggle, the New Zealand Division had carried La Basse Ville. Northward as far as Hollebeke we confined ourselves to advancing our front a few hundred yards to a line of strong points and fortified farms. On Plumer's left the 41st Division pushed half a mile down the valley of the Roosebeek, and on one side of the Ypres–Comines Canal took the village of Hollebeke, and on the other the rubble-heap which had been Klein Zillebeke. Once again after three years we held that classic soil where, at the close of a dark November day, Cavan's brigade of Guards and Kavanagh's dismounted Household Cavalry had turned the last wave of the German assault.

According to plan, the next day should have seen a second blow

with cumulative force. But the weather had joined the enemy. From midday on 1st August for four days and four nights without intermission fell the rain. Even when it stopped on the 5th there followed days of sombre skies and wet mists and murky clouds. The misery of our troops, huddled in their impromptu lines or strung out in shell-holes, cannot be pictured in words. Nor can the supreme disappointment of the High Command. After months of thought and weeks of laborious preparation, just when a brilliant start had been made, they saw their hopes dashed to the ground. An offensive was still possible, but it could not be the offensive planned. The time-schedule was fatally dislocated. The situation is best described in the unemotional words of Sir Douglas Haig's dispatch: "The low-lying, clayey soil, torn by shells and sodden by rain, turned to a succession of vast muddy pools. The valleys of the choked and overflowing streams were speedily transformed into long stretches of bog, impassable except by a few well-defined tracks, which became marks for the enemy's artillery. To leave these tracks was to risk death by drowning, and in the course of the subsequent fighting on several occasions both men and pack animals were lost in this way. In these conditions operations of any magnitude became impossible, and the resumption of our offensive was necessarily postponed until a period of fine weather should allow the ground to recover. As had been the case in the Arras battle, this unavoidable delay in the development of our offensive was of the greatest service to the enemy. Valuable time was lost, the troops opposed to us were able to recover from the disorganization produced by our first attack, and the enemy was given the opportunity to bring up reinforcements."

For a fortnight we held our hand. To advance was a stark impossibility till the countryside was a little drier, for though we had won positions on the heights, our communications ran through the spongy Salient. The enemy's counter-attacks were to some extent also crippled by the weather. Those on the night of the first day of the battle were aimed at driving us off the high ground north of the Menin road, and regaining his second-line system between Frezenberg and St. Julien. They failed to shake us; but it was considered wise, in order to escape the heavy shelling, to withdraw our men temporarily from St. Julien itself, though we still held a bridgehead on the Steenebeek, north of the village. On 3rd August we reoccupied St. Julien, and consolidated our positions on the right bank of the Steenebeek by a line of points

which linked us with the French. On 10th August we took the whole of Westhoek, and thereby won the last point in the old German second position which gave any chance of observation over Ypres. There the enemy counter-attacked violently and fruitlessly on the two following days. Meantime the French had cleared the ground around the Kortekeer Cabaret and its famous crossroads, and had forced their way well across the peninsula between the Yser Canal and the Martjevaart.

In the middle of the month there was a short break in the storms, and Haig took advantage of it for a new attack. He began by a highly successful subsidiary action in the south, designed to threaten an important position of the enemy, and prevent him massing all his strength before the Salient. We have seen how, during the Battle of Arras and the lesser operations of July, the Canadian Corps had eaten into the defences of Lens from the south and south-west. The new attack came from the north-east, on a front of 4,000 yards, on a line south-east of Loos, running roughly from the Lens–Béthune road to the Bois Hugo. On September 15, 1915, at the Battle of Loos, troops of the 15th Division had swarmed across Hill 70 east of the village, and some had even penetrated into Cité St. Auguste, the mining suburb of Lens beyond the railway line. The latter never returned, and Hill 70, after a gallant defence against odds, was relinquished before the close of the battle. Ever since then the place had been a thorn in our side, for it gave the enemy good observation. On 15th August, at 4.25 in the morning, the Canadians swept over Hill 70, and south of it crossed the Lens–La Bassée road, and took the *faubourgs* of Cité St. Laurent and Cité St. Emile. North of it they won the little Bois Rasé and the western half of the Bois Hugo. All their objectives were gained, except a short length of trench west of Cité St. Auguste, which fell the following afternoon. During the morning of the 15th counter-attacks by the German local reserves were easily beaten off, and in the evening a division of the German Guard was thrown in without better success. It was caught in the open by the deadly rifle and machine-gun fire of the Canadians. From the three German divisions opposed to us that day we took 1,120 prisoners.

Next day, the 16th, saw the second stage of the Ypres struggle. The Fifth Army was directed against the German third position, the Gheluvelt–Langemarck line, which ran from the Menin road along the second of the tiers of ridges which rimmed the Salient on the east. These tiers, the highest and most easterly of which

was the famous Passchendaele crest, had the common features that they all sprang from one southern boss or pillar, the point on the Menin road marked 64 metres, which we knew as Clapham Junction, and all as they ran northward lost elevation. The day was destined to show at its best Armin's new defensive methods. The weather was still thick and damp, making aerial observation difficult, and therefore depriving us of timely notice of the enemy's counter-attacks. His front was sown with "pill-boxes," the tactical device which as yet we scarcely understood, and had not found a weapon to meet. The ground was sloppy, and made tangled and difficult with broken woods. The conditions were ideal for the practice of that method which Armin had foreshadowed at Messines and had now definitely embraced—that system of "elastic defence," in the words of the official dispatch, "in which his forward trench lines were held only in sufficient strength to disorganize the attack, while the bulk of his forces were kept in close reserve, ready to deliver a powerful and immediate blow which might recover the positions overrun by our troops before we had had time to consolidate them."

The attack took place at dawn, 4.45 a.m., and on the Allies left and left centre had an immediate success. The French cleared the whole peninsula between the Yser Canal and the Martjevaart, and, wading through deep floods, captured the strongly fortified bridgehead of Drie Grachten. The British left, the 29th and 20th Divisions, pressed on beyond the Bixschoote–Langemarck road, and took the hamlet of Wijdendrift. At first they were checked in the outskirts of Langemarck; but by eight o'clock they held the village, and by nine they had won their final objective, the portion of the German third-line system half a mile farther north. But very different was the fate of the British centre. North and north-east of St. Julien, and between the Wieltje–Passchendaele and the Ypres–Zonnebeke roads, it came up against the full strength of the "pill-boxes." A number fell to us, and all day we struggled on in the mud, losing heavily from the concealed machine-gun fire. In some places our men reached their final objectives, but they could not abide in them. Enemy counter-attacks later in the morning forced us back, and at the close of the day we were little beyond our starting-point. Our Langemarck gains were, however, secured, for the 55th, 48th, and 11th Divisions had established a defensive flank on a line from east of Langemarck to north of St. Julien.

On the British right the fighting was still more desperate. On the Menin road we had already passed the highest point, Hill 64,

and were moving on the wood of Herenthage, which we called Inverness Copse, and which lay on the slopes towards Gheluvelt. This wood was intersected by the highway, and north of it lay the Nonnenbosch, with its southern outlier, which we knew as Glencorse Wood. East of Glencorse Wood was the big Polygon Wood, with the remains of a racecourse in the heart of it. In all this area our advance was most stubbornly contested, and at the end of the action we had done no more than gain a fraction of the western edge of Glencorse Wood, and advance a little way north of Westhoek. Taking the battle-ground as a whole, as a result of the day we had made a considerable gap in the German third line, and taken over two thousand prisoners and thirty guns.

The rest of the month was one long downpour. We made a few small gains—notably on the 19th, 22nd, and 27th, when, with the assistance of tanks, we improved our position on a two-mile front between St. Julien and the Ypres–Roulers railway, and took a number of strong points and fortified farms. On the 22nd we also attacked along the Menin road, and after six days' continuous fighting made some way in Glencorse Wood, and won the western edge of Inverness Copse.

This second stage of the battle was beyond doubt a serious British check. We had encountered a new tactical device of the enemy, and it had defeated us. The Fifth Army had fought with the most splendid gallantry, but its courage had been largely fruitless. We had beyond doubt caused the enemy serious losses, but he had taken a heavier toll of our own ranks. Fine brigades had been hurled in succession against a concrete wall, and had been sorely battered. For almost the first time in the campaign there was a sense of discouragement abroad on our front. Men felt that they were being sacrificed blindly; that every fight was a soldiers' fight, and that such sledge-hammer tactics were too crude to meet the problem. For a moment there was a real ebb of confidence in British leadership. That such a feeling should exist among journalists and politicians matters little; but it matters much if it is found among troops in the field. Especially the reputation of Sir Hubert Gough was affected, and the trust of the Fifth Army in its commander was shaken. He was believed to have shown himself a little stiff and unresourceful, a repute which was to have an unfortunate effect upon the career of a most gallant soldier. Seven months later he suffered the consequences of this unpopularity by being relieved of his command after a battle for which he deserved only praise

Haig accordingly brought upon the scene the man who was rapidly coming to recognition as the most accomplished of army commanders. The front of the Second Army was extended northward, and Sir Herbert Plumer took over the attack upon the southern portion of the enemy front on the Menin road. The better part of a month was spent in preparation, while Plumer patiently thought out the problem. Sorely tried—too sorely tried—divisions were taken out of the line to rest, and the dispositions on the whole front of assault were readjusted. Especially our artillery tactics were revised, in order to cope with the "pill-boxes." In the early days of September the weather improved, and the sodden Salient began slowly to dry. That is to say, the mud hardened into something like the *séracs* of a glacier, and the streams became streams again, and not lagoons. But the process was slow, and it was not till the third week of the month that the next stage in the battle could begin.

The new eight-mile front of attack ran from the Ypres–Staden railway north of Langemarck to the Ypres–Comines Canal north of Hollebeke. On the left and centre our objectives were narrowly limited, averaging about three-quarters of a mile; but Plumer on the right had the serious task of pushing for a mile along the Menin road. The "pill-box" problem had been studied, and a solution, it was believed, had been found, not by miraculous ingenuity, but by patience and care. The little fortalices had been methodically reconnoitred, and our heavy barrage so arranged as to cover each mark. Even when a direct hit was not attained, it was believed that the concussion of the great shells might loosen some of the lesser structures, while fumes, smoke, and gas would make the life of the inmates difficult. One famous division followed with complete success another plan. Having located the "pill-box," the field-gun barrage lengthened on both sides of it; which enabled the advancing troops, hugging their barrage, to get round its unprotected rear.

Wednesday, 19th September, was a clear blowing day, but at nine o'clock in the evening the rain began, and fell heavily all that night. At dawn the drizzle stopped, but a wet mist remained, which blinded our air reconnaissance. At 5.40 a.m. on the 20th the attack was launched. Presently the fog cleared, and the sun came out, and our airplanes were able to fight in line with the infantry, attacking enemy trenches and concentrations with machine-gun fire. The ground was knee-deep in mud, but the whole

British line pressed forward. The Fifth Army's left north of the Zonnebeke–Langemarck road—the 47th and 51st Divisions—won all its objectives by midday. South of them the 55th was not less successful in the appalling mud south-east of St. Julien. Perhaps the most remarkable achievement was that of the Scottish and South African brigades of the 9th Division, which, advancing on both sides of the Ypres–Roulers railway, won their final objectives in three hours. They carried a line of fortified farms, the two important redoubts called Zonnebeke and Bremen, and the hamlet of Zevenkote.

The crux of the battle lay in the area of the Second Army, and the vital point was the work of its centre along the Menin road. There lay the key of the enemy's position, and there in defence he had already sent in sixteen divisions. That day the fighting was extended well south of the highroad. Plumer's right —the 19th Division—cleared the small woods north of the Ypres–Comines Canal. Farther north the 39th and 41st Divisions pushed through the eastern fringe of Shrewsbury Forest, across the stream called the Bassevillebeek, which drains to the Lys, with its hideous cluster of ponds called Dumbarton Lakes, and up the slopes of the Tower Hamlets spur, on the eastern side of which lay Gheluvelt. Here they encountered heavy machine-gun fire from the ridge between Veldhoek and the Tower Hamlets. On their left the 23rd Division had been brilliantly successful. It had carried the whole of Inverness Copse, and had captured Veldhoek itself, as a result of which late in the day we were able to establish ourselves across the Tower Hamlets spur. The Australians, on Plumer's left, had for their first task the clearing of the rest of Glencorse Wood and the Nonnenbosch. This they achieved early in the morning, and by 10 a.m. had taken Polygonveld, at the north-western corner of the great Polygon Wood. For a little they were held up at Black Watch Corner, at the south-western angle ; but by midday they had passed it, and had secured the whole western half of the wood up to the racecourse, thus reaching their final objectives.

This day's battle cracked the kernel of the German defence in the Salient. It showed a limited advance, and the total of 3,000 prisoners had been often exceeded in a day's fighting ; but every inch of the ground won was vital. We had carried the southern pillar on which the security of the Passchendaele ridge depended. Few struggles in the campaign were more desperate, or carried out on a more gruesome battlefield. The maze of quag-

mires, splintered woods, ruined husks of "pill-boxes," water-filled shell-holes, and foul creeks which made up the land on both sides of the Menin road was a sight which to the recollection of most men must seem like a fevered nightmare. It was the classic soil on which during the First Battle of Ypres the 1st and 2nd Divisions had stayed the German rush for the Channel. Then it had been a broken but still recognizable and featured countryside; now the elements seemed to have blended with each other to make of it a limbo outside mortal experience and almost beyond human imagining. Only on some of the contorted hills of Verdun could a parallel be found. The battle of 20th September was a proof to what heights of endurance the British soldier may attain. It was an example, too, of how thought and patience may achieve success in spite of every disadvantage of weather, terrain, and enemy strength.

Armin could not accept meekly the losses of the 20th. That afternoon and evening he made no less than eleven counter-attacks. Most of them failed, but east of St. Julien he retook a farm which we did not win back till the next day. North-east of Langemarck a short length of German trench held out till the 23rd. On the 21st, and for the four days following, he attacked north-east of St. Julien, and very fiercely on the front between the Tower Hamlets and the Polygon Wood. On the 25th the Germans got into our lines north of the Menin road; but after a struggle of many hours, the 33rd and the 5th Australian Divisions succeeded in ejecting them. In the meantime preparations were being hastened on for the next stage. We had now won all the interior ridges of the Salient and the southern pillar; but we were not yet within striking distance of the north part of the main Passchendaele ridge. To attain this, we must lie east of Zonnebeke and the Polygon Wood at the foot of the final slopes. Moreover, we must act quickly. We were well aware that the enemy intended a counter-attack in force, and it was our object to anticipate him.

We struck again on 26th September. The weather was fine, and for a brief week it ceased to be an element in the German defensive. Our front of attack was the six-mile stretch from north-east of St. Julien to south of the Tower Hamlets. The new advance was as precise and complete as its predecessor of the 20th. At ten minutes to six our infantry moved forward. On our left the 58th and 59th Divisions pushed on both sides of the Wieltje–Passchendaele road to the upper course of the Haanebeek.

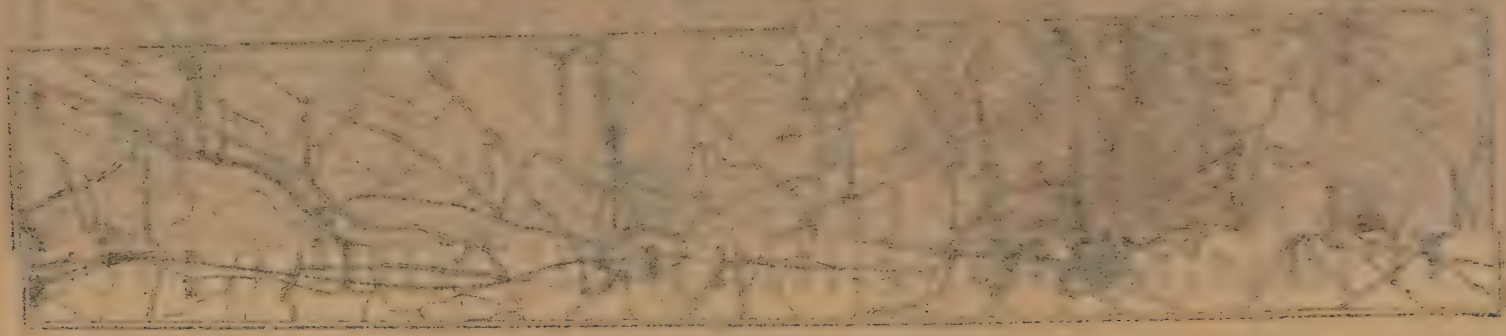
In the centre, after some sharp fighting along the Ypres–Roulers railway line, the 3rd Division took the ruins of Zonnebeke village —which had been the apex of the Salient when we evacuated it in May 1915. Farther south the Australians carried the remainder of the Polygon Wood; while they also assisted the sorely tried 33rd and 39th Divisions on their right, which were struggling in the maze of creeks and trenches beyond Veldhoek. These divisions, though they had suffered one of the enemy's severest counter-strokes the day before, nevertheless were able to join in the general advance. One dramatic performance fell to their share. They relieved two companies of the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders, who had been isolated the night before, and had held out for twelve hours in the midst of the enemy.

The last days of fine weather were employed by the Germans in some of the most resolute counter-attacks of the battle. The troops which they had intended to use in their frustrated offensive of the 26th were now employed to undo the effects of our advance. There were seven attacks during the day, notably in the area between the Reutelbeek and the Polygon Wood. Then came a pause, while the enemy collected his shattered strength; and on the last day of the month he began again with two *flammenwerfer* attacks north of the Menin road. Five more followed next day in the same place, and one south of the Roulers railway. Nothing came of them, except the temporary loss of two advanced posts south-east of the Polygon Wood. The last took place on 3rd October, close to the Menin road, but it was broken up by our guns before it reached our lines.

That night the weather broke, and a gale from the south-west brought heavy rains. It was the old ill-luck of our army, for on the 4th we had planned the next stage of the battle. But if the weather was ill-timed, not so was our attack. The enemy had brought up three fresh divisions, with a view to recovering his losses of the 26th. Ten minutes past six was his zero hour, and by good fortune and good guiding six o'clock was ours. Our barrage burst upon his infantry when it was forming up for the assault, and cut great swathes in its ranks. While the Germans were yet in the confusion of miscarried plans our bayonets were upon them. Our objective was the line of the main ridge east of Zonnebeke, the southern part of what was called the Passchendaele heights, along which ran the north road from Becelaere. Our main front was the seven miles from the Ypres–Staden railway to the Menin road, though we also advanced a short distance south of that

THE THIRD BATTLE OF YPRES.

(*Facing p. 596.*)



highway. By midday every objective had been gained. The achievement of Messines and the first day of Arras was repeated. The enemy, caught on the brink of an attack of his own, was not merely repulsed : a considerable part of his forces was destroyed.

The British left was directed along the Poelcappelle road, in a country so nearly flat that the chief feature was a hill marked 19 metres. After a sharp struggle we won this position, lost it, and regained it before evening. Farther south we entered Poelcappelle village, and occupied its western half. The valley of the Stroombeek was a sea of mud, but the 48th Division forced its way across it. In our centre lay the area of the projected German attack—the Grafenstafel ridge jutting west from the Passchendaele heights, and the central part of the heights themselves. The New Zealand Division, struggling across the swamps of the upper Haanebeek, took the village of Grafenstafel and won the crest of the spur. On their right, the Australians carried Molenaarelsthoek and Broodseinde, and drove the 4th Prussian Guards from the ridge summit, pressing beyond the Becelaere–Passchendaele road. Southward, again, the 7th Division traversed the crest and took Noordemdhoek, while the 21st Division on their right took the village of Reutel and cleared the tangled ground east of the Polygon Wood. Thence as far as the Menin road there was desperate fighting in the hollows of the Reutelbeek and the Polygonbeek, where the 5th Division stormed the Polderhoek Château. A little after midday we had gained all our final objectives. We had broken up forty German battalions, and had taken over 5,000 prisoners, including 138 officers. The counter-attacks which followed—there were no less than eight between the Menin road and Reutel—won back little ground. From Mount Sorrel, in the south, we held 9,000 yards of the crest of the ultimate ridge, and our grip of the Grafenstafel spur gave us a good defensive flank on the north. Above all, we had succeeded in nullifying Armin's tactics of defence ; and we captured documents which made it plain that the German High Command were wavering, and inclined to a return to their old method of holding their front line in force. Sir Herbert Plumer's leadership had been abundantly justified.

But October had set in, storm followed storm, and Haig had to reconsider his plan of campaign. Weather and a dozen other malignant accidents had wrecked the larger scheme of a Flanders offensive. Gone was the hope of clearing the coast or of driving

the enemy out of his Flemish bases. What had been laboriously achieved at the end of ten weeks had been in the programme for the first fortnight. It was only a preliminary; the main objectives lay beyond the Passchendaele ridge. The weather had compelled us to make our advance by stages, widely separated in time, with the result that the enemy had been able to bring up his reserves and reorganize his defence. Our pressure could not be cumulative, and we had been unable to reap the full fruits of each success.

There was, therefore, no chance of any decisive operation in the Flanders area, and it became a serious question for Haig whether the Ypres operations should be continued. If October should bring the kind of weather which it had shown the year before on the Somme, the Salient would be an ugly fighting ground. The extremity of Russia was permitting more and more German divisions to be transferred to the West, which would not make our task easier. On the other hand, we had not won the last even of the limited preliminary objectives; for we did not control the whole Passchendaele ridge, and it might well be urged that, till we did, we had not secured our own position or made difficult the enemy's against the coming winter. Moreover, the French were preparing a great attack on the Aisne heights for the last week of the month, and it was desirable that the German mind should be kept engrossed with the northern line. Also events of high importance were in train in Italy, and the attack towards Cambrai in November had been decided upon—which made it essential to fix the enemy's attention on the Flanders front. Balancing the pros and cons of the matter, Haig resolved to continue his offensive on a modified scale * till the end of October, or such time as would give our men the chance of reaching Passchendaele.

The last stages of the Third Battle of Ypres were probably the muddiest combats ever known in the history of war. It rained incessantly—sometimes clearing to a drizzle or a Scots mist, but relapsing into a downpour on any day fixed for our attack. The British movements became an accurate barometer: whenever it was more than usually tempestuous it was safe to assume that some zero hour was near. Tuesday, the 9th, was the day fixed for an advance on a broad front by both French and British; but all day on the 7th and 8th it rained, and the night of the 8th was black darkness above and a melting earth beneath. It was a difficult task

* In the last stage—from 5th October to 10th November—the scale of fighting was considerably reduced. In the last fortnight the number of British divisions which attacked was approximately the same as the number used on a single day, the 31st July

assembling troops under such conditions; but the thing was accomplished, and at twenty minutes past five in the dripping dawn of the 9th our infantry moved forward. The operations of the 4th had bulged our centre between Poelcappelle and Becelaere, and it was necessary to bring up our left wing. Hence, though we attacked everywhere from the Polygon Wood northward, our main effort was on the six miles from a point east of Zonnebeke to the north-west of Langemarck; while the French, on our left, continued the front of assault to the edge of the St. Jansbeek, south of Draaibank.

In the north the French * and the British Guards Division, advancing side by side, had won all their objectives by the early afternoon. They crossed the St. Jansbeek, carried the hamlets of St. Janshoek, Mangelaare, Veldhoek, and Koekuit, and established themselves on the skirts of the great Houthulst Forest, the northern pillar of the German line. South of the Ypres–Staden railway the 29th, 4th, and 11th Divisions fought their way east of the Poelcappelle–Houthulst road, and captured the whole of the ruins of Poelcappelle. In the centre the Australians and the 66th, 49th, and 48th Divisions moved nearer to Passchendaele along the main ridge, taking the hamlets of Nieuwemolen and Keerselaarhoek. The day was successful, for our final objectives were almost everywhere attained, and over 2,000 prisoners were taken.

It was Haig's intention to press on the advance, for the weather and the landscape were such that there was less hardship in going on than in staying still in lagoons and shell-craters, where comfort or security was unattainable. The next attack was fixed for Friday, the 12th; but the rain fell in sheets during the night of the 11th, and the movement was countermanded soon after it had begun. Nevertheless we made some progress between the Roulers railway and Houthulst Forest, and 1,000 prisoners were taken. Such fighting was the last word in human misery, for the country was now one irreclaimable bog, and the occasional hours of watery sunshine had no power to dry it. "You might as well try," wrote one observer, "to empty a bath by holding lighted matches over it." But Haig still kept his eye on Passchendaele, for the Cambrai preparations were maturing and the French attack on the Aisne heights was now drawing very near. So the battle among the shell-holes and swamps continued.

On the 22nd we pushed east of Poelcappelle, and crept a little

* Anthoine's First Army achieved excellent results at a wonderfully low cost. In its three months' fighting it had only 8,527 casualties, of whom 1,625 were killed.

farther into the Houthulst Wood. On the 25th we had a stroke of fortune, for a strong wind blew from the west which slightly hardened the ground. On the 26th the rain returned, but at a quarter to six in the morning we attacked on a front from the Roulers railway to beyond Poelcappelle. From Passchendaele the Bellevue spur runs westward, and between it and the Grafenstafel spur is the valley of a brooklet called the Ravebeek, a tributary of the Stroombeek. Along this stream the 4th and 3rd Canadian Divisions moved against the main ridge, and won the little hill just south of Passchendaele village. Their left had a hard struggle on the Bellevue spur, where the old main Staden–Zonnebeke line of the German defences ran; but the place was carried in the afternoon at the second attempt, and by the evening the Canadians held all their objectives. On the left of the Canadians the 63rd (Royal Naval) and the 58th Divisions continued the advance in the low-lying ground north of the Bellevue ridge. That day on our right British troops entered Gheluvelt for the first time since the First Battle of Ypres. Their rifles, however, were choked with mud, and they were compelled to withdraw before the enemy's counter-attack.

On that day, the 26th, the French on our left were busy bridging the St. Jansbeek, in its lower course west of Draaibank. Their object was to clear the ground called the Merckem peninsula, between the Blankaart Lake, the Martjevaart or St. Jansbeek, and the Yser Canal. On the 27th they were in action along with the Belgians on their left, who crossed the Yser at Knockehoek. The Allies won the villages of Aschhoop, Kippe, and Merckem, and reached the southern shore of the Blankaart Lake. By the morning of the 28th the whole of the Merckem peninsula had been cleared of the enemy. This success menaced from the west the Forest of Houthulst.

On 30th October came the attack on Passchendaele itself. At 5.50 a.m., in a clear, cold dawn, the 4th and 3rd Canadian Divisions attacked from the top of the Ravebeek valley and along the crest of the ridge, while the 58th and 63rd Divisions moved up the Paddebeek rivulet which runs north of the Bellevue spur. At ten in the morning the rain began again, and the strength of the enemy position, and the desperate resistance of the 5th and 11th Bavarian Divisions which held it, made the day one of the severest in the battle. The Canadians won Crest Farm, south of the village, and carried also the spur to the west, and held it against five counter-attacks. They forced their way into the outskirts of

Passchendaele; but the appalling condition of the Paddebeek valley prevented the Londoners and the Royal Naval Division from advancing far, so that the Canadian front formed a sharp salient.

But the end was not far off. Some days of dry weather followed, during which small advances were made to improve our position. At 6 a.m. on Tuesday, 6th November, the 2nd and 1st Canadian Divisions swept forward again, carried the whole of Passchendaele, and pushed northward to the Goudberg spur. Four days later they increased their gains, so that all the vital part of the main ridge of West Flanders was in British hands. We dominated the enemy's hinterland in the flats towards Roulers and Thourout, and he had the prospect of a restless winter under our direct observation. The Third Battle of Ypres had wiped out the Salient where for three years we had been at the mercy of the German guns.

III.

The great struggle which we have considered was strategically a British failure. We did not come within measurable distance of our major purpose, and that owing to no fault in generalship or fighting virtue, but through the maleficence of the weather in a land where weather was all in all. We gambled upon a normal August, and we did not get it. The sea of mud which lapped around the Salient was the true defence of the enemy. Consequently the battle, which might have had a profound strategic significance in the campaign, became merely an episode in the war of attrition, a repetition of the Somme tactics, though conspicuously less successful and considerably more costly than the fighting of 1916. Since 31st July we had taken 24,065 prisoners, 74 guns, 941 machine guns, and 138 trench mortars. We had drawn in seventy-eight German divisions, of which eighteen had been engaged a second or a third time. But, to set against this, our own losses had been severe, and the enemy had now a big reservoir for reinforcements. Already forty fresh divisions were in process of transference to the West from the Russian front, apart from drafts to replace losses in other units.

Third Ypres was the costliest battle up to date fought by a British army, for the casualties from 31st July to 10th November were in killed, wounded, and missing 230,000 men. For the gain of a trivial ridge and a few miles of mud the price might well be deemed

fantastic ; but such a judgment would miss the true reason of the action. It was fought out of dire necessity, at the entreaty of France, lest a worse thing should befall. At all costs it was needful to prevent a German attack in the West during the summer and autumn of 1917 while Pétain was nursing his armies back to health. On the whole it achieved this purpose of distraction, as Ludendorff's own narrative bears witness. It delayed the attack on the Dvina, which was the end of Russia in the field ; it delayed the attack on Italy, and when that came diverted troops to Flanders that would have otherwise increased the danger at Caporetto ; it gave France six months of ease, and enabled Pétain to stage two highly successful small-scale attacks which restored the *moral* of his men. Above all, it gravely reduced the number of Germany's best shock-troops, and so benefited the Allies in their fiery trial of the following spring. If it be argued that it was too protracted and that the last stages might have been foregone, to point to the preparations for the Cambrai battle would seem to be sufficient answer. Haig had to fight so as to strain the enemy to the uttermost, and if in his effort he himself suffered heavily he had counted the cost. Like Russia at Tannenberg, like France at Verdun, Britain at Third Ypres sacrificed herself for the common cause.

One outstanding fact in the struggle was the superb endurance and valour of the new British armies, fighting under conditions which for horror and misery had scarcely been paralleled in war. To them the Commander-in-Chief paid a fitting tribute: "Throughout the northern operations our troops have been fighting over ground every foot of which is sacred to the memory of those who, in the First and Second Battles of Ypres, fought and died to make possible the victories of the armies which to-day are rolling back the tide stayed by their sacrifices. It is no disparagement of the gallant deeds performed on other fronts to say that, in the stubborn struggle for the line of hills which stretches from Wytschaete to Passchendaele, the great armies that to-day are shouldering the burden of our Empire have shown themselves worthy of the regiments which, in October and November of 1914, made Ypres take rank for ever amongst the most glorious of British battles." Ypres was indeed to Britain what Verdun was to France—the hallowed soil which called forth the highest virtue of her people, a battle-ground where there could be no failure without loss of honour. The armies which fought there in the autumn of 1917 were very different from the few divisions which

had held the fort during the earlier struggles. But there were links of connection. The Guards, by more than one fine advance, were recompensed for the awful tension of October 1914, when at Gheluvelt and Klein Zillebeke some of their best battalions had been destroyed. And it fell to Canada, by the crowning victory at Passchendaele, to avenge the gas attack of April 1915, when only her dauntless two brigades stood between Ypres and the enemy.

The battlefield of the old Salient was now as featureless as the Sahara or the mid-Atlantic. All landmarks had been obliterated; the very ridges and streams had changed their character. The names which still crowded the map had no longer any geographical counterpart; they were no more than measurements on a plane, as abstract as the points of the mathematician. It was war bared to the buff, stripped of any of the tattered romance which has clung to older fields. And yet in its very grossness it was war sublimated, for the material appanages had vanished. The quaint Flemish names belonged not now to the solid homely earth; they seemed rather points on a spiritual map, marking advance and retreat in the gigantic striving of the souls of peoples.

End of Volume III.

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